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FROM

# SOLOMON TO THE CAPTIVITY.

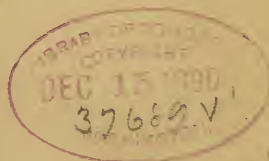
THE STORY OF THE TWO HEBREW  
KINGDOMS.

BY

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AND

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CONTENTS.

OUTLINE SKETCH OF THE TWO KINGDOMS. D. G. .... 7

THE KINGDOM DIVIDED. D. G. .... 19

    “To your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David.”  
    1 KINGS 12:16.

IDOLATRY IN ISRAEL; OR THE SIN OF JEROBOAM.  
    D. G. .... 33

    “Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.” 1 KINGS  
    22:52.

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE. — THE FIRST CHAPTER OF  
    HIS REFORMATION WORK. D. G. .... 46

    “Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead.”  
    1 KINGS 17:1.

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL; OR THE RE-  
    LIGION OF GOD TESTED AND FOUND TRUE.  
    D. G. .... 60

    “And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and  
    they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.”  
    1 KINGS 18:39.

THE DISCOURAGED PROPHET; OR ELIJAH AT HOREB.  
    D. G. .... 76

    “And Elijah went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came  
    and sat down under a juniper-tree; and he requested for himself  
    that he might die.” 1 KINGS 19:4.

AHAB’S COVETOUSNESS; OR RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.  
    D. G. .... 87

    “Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood  
    of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.” 1 KINGS 21:19.

ELIJAH TRANSLATED: A REVELATION OF THE BELIEVER'S FUTURE. D. G. ....	100
--	-----

"Behold there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." 2 KINGS 2:11.

THE GODLY SUCCESSION; OR ELIJAH, THEN ELISHA. D. G. ....	112
--	-----

"And he took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him."  
"And when the sons of the prophets saw him they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha." 2 KINGS 2:14, 15.

THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON. D. G. ....	125
----------------------------------	-----

"And the child opened his eyes." 2 KINGS 4:35.

NAAMAN'S RASH ANGER; OR THE PLAY OF TEMPER IN HUMAN LIFE. D. G. ....	136
--	-----

"But Naaman was wroth and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." "So he turned and went away in a rage." 2 KINGS 5:11, 12.

GEHAZI PUNISHED. L. W. M. ....	147
--------------------------------	-----

"Be sure your sin will find you out." NUM. 32:23.

ELISHA AT DOTHAN; OR THE SUPERNATURAL PROTECTION OF THE CHILD OF GOD. D. G. ....	154
--	-----

"And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." 2 KINGS 6:17.

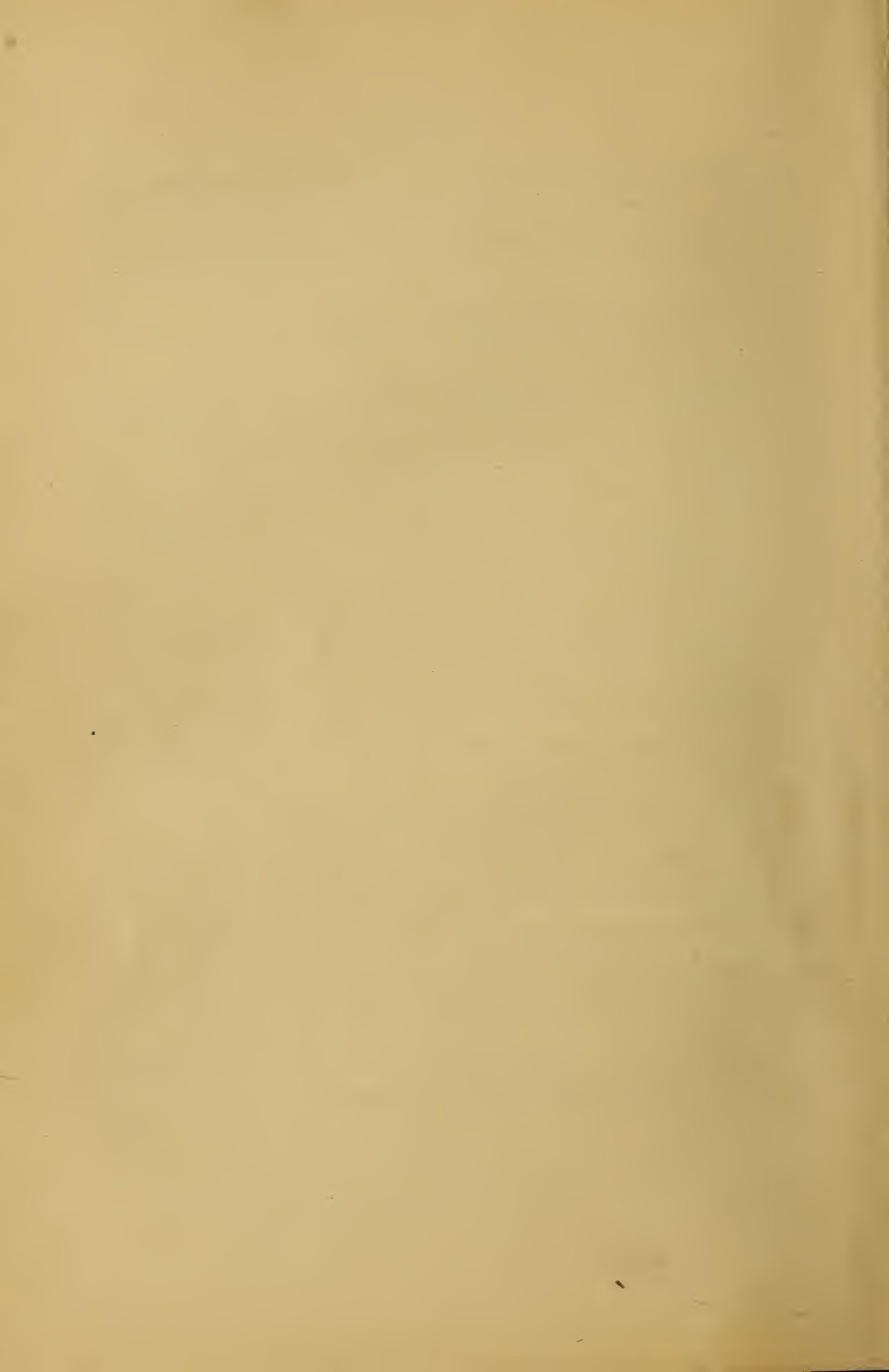
SAVED FROM FAMINE. L. W. M. ....	165
----------------------------------	-----

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" PSALM 107:8.

JEHU; OR RELIGIOUS ZEAL. D. G. ....	174
-------------------------------------	-----

"Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord." 2 KINGS 10:16.

JONAH COMMISSIONED TO PREACH IN NINEVEH.	
D. G. ....	185
"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it."	
JONAH 1:2.	
EFFECT OF JONAH'S PREACHING. D. G. ....	196
"So the people of Nineveh believed God." JONAH 3:6.	
ISRAEL OFTEN REPROVED. L. W. M. ....	207
"He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." PROV. 29:1.	
ISRAEL'S OVERTHROW FORETOLD. L. W. M. ....	220
"Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." LUKE 8:18.	
SIN THE CAUSE OF SORROW. L. W. M. ....	230
"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God."	
ISAIAH 59:2.	
CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL. L. W. M. ....	240
"Because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you." 2 CHRON. 24:20.	
THE TEMPLE REPAIRED. L. W. M. ....	249
"God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 COR. 9:7.	
HEZEKIAH, THE GOOD KING. L. W. M. ....	259
"Them that honor Me I will honor." 1 SAM. 2:30.	
JOSIAH AND THE BOOK OF THE LORD. D. G. ....	273
"Go inquire of the Lord for me." 2 CHRON. 34:21.	
CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH. D. G. ....	283
"And the city was besieged." 2 KINGS 25:2.	





FROM

# SOLOMON TO THE CAPTIVITY.

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## OUTLINE SKETCH OF THE TWO KINGDOMS.

As we open the historic page we find the Hebrew nation in the acme of its magnificence. It is the growth of centuries. It embodies the living of the grandest men of time. It is the incorporation of the best thoughts and purposes of Deity. It is the expression of God's matchless love, and God's fidelity in covenant-keeping, and God's forbearance and forgiveness. The life of Moses is in it—his talents, toils, prayers, holy character, and self-surrender. Joshua is in it—his heroism, war-genius, and loyalty. Samuel is in it—his prophetic life and his faculty for organization. David is in it—his sword and his harp, and his spirit of praise which keeps alive the soul-nature of the Hebrew citizen. It is a pity that this magnificent nation must be broken into two, but it is, and the division is deep and bitter and broad. As we are to study the histories of the two kingdoms made from this one, let us in the very start take a bird's-eye-view as a preparation for entering into details.

The ten tribes formed the northern kingdom, which was known as ISRAEL; the other two tribes formed the southern kingdom, known as JUDAH.

### I. ISRAEL.

Israel had more than five times the population and territory of Judah. Its territory out-ranked that of Judah in almost everything. With the exception of Jerusalem and Hebron, it had in it all the sites that were dear to the Hebrew, the places of memory and of tender association. It far surpassed the territory of Judah for richness of fertility and for grandeur of scenery. Jeroboam might well be proud of his kingdom when elected to it by the national assembly at Shechem. Judging with human eyes, and as men judge, any one would have chosen the northern kingdom in preference to the southern. But the future does not bear out the opening prospect.

If we were asked to give in a single phrase a characteristic description of the kingdom of the ten tribes, we would say, *It was a military monarchy*. It was such from the beginning of its career to the close. A military monarchy suggests the idea of unrest, change, revolution. Its dynasties rose and fell at short intervals, most of them in the second generation: only one continued to the fifth generation. In two centuries and a half it had no less than nineteen kings. Judah in the same period had only twelve, and these were all in the line of the one house of David. The kings of the ten tribes were in the lines of many houses. Many of

them were usurpers who were put upon the throne by treason and blood. They were nearly all tyrannical, acting upon the principle that might makes right. There is a dismal monotony about the reign of these kings. The invariable formula used to delineate their character is this: "*He did evil in the sight of the Lord.*" In the nineteen kings we have nine different dynasties, four of which ended with the conspirators who founded them. Among the whole nineteen there was "*not one calling upon the name of the Lord*" (Hos. 7:7). Of these nineteen there were only three who could, from a worldly standpoint, be called successful. They were Jehu and his descendant Jeroboam II., and Hoshea, the last king, under whose reign the kingdom passed out of existence.

The reason the ten tribes passed out of existence as a nation was their disloyalty to God. They first attempted to worship the true God in a false and idolatrous way, under the lead of Jeroboam their first king, and from this they leaped into out-and-out idolatry under Ahab. For this disloyalty and treason God gave them into the hands of the Assyrians. But why did not God destroy their nationality at once? There was a reason. It was not found in their corrupt kings, but it was found in their holy prophets. It was the prophet-power that warded off destruction for 250 years. Judah, as we will see, had more prophets who found a larger individual place in the Bible than the prophets of the ten tribes; but Israel, for a time at least, had a far greater number

of prophets than Judah. In Israel the prophets could be counted by the fifty. Obadiah, the governor of king Ahab's house, hid fifty. The ten tribes had true prophets of God, and this was so from the beginning to the final Captivity. They had such prophets as Elijah and Elisha and Jonah and Hosea and Amos. These all endeavored to keep the nation true to God.

We know the result of the prophet-power which made for righteousness in Elijah's day. There were 7,000 in the ten tribes who had not bowed the knee to Baal. We are acquainted with the reformation which Elijah inaugurated. Hosea was working with all his might at the time of the Captivity. This is enough to show us that there was a prophet-power in the nation, just as there was a king-power and a priest-power.

But you may ask, Why did not the prophet-power prevail to the saving of the nation? The answer is this: the king on the throne opposed the prophet of God, and where it was possible silenced him by slaying him. You know how Ahab persecuted Elijah. Ahab kept him from doing the work in the kingdom which was in his heart to do. If the prophet-power had not been interfered with by the king-power and priest-power, it would have preserved the nation of the ten tribes unto the coming of Christ.

At the end of 250 years the ten tribes were carried captive by the king of Assyria. We are not to imagine, however, that they were all carried captive at once. The kingdom was invaded by



three or four successive kings of Assyria. In the year 750 B. C. Tiglath-Pileser carried away the Trans-Jordanic tribes and the inhabitants of Galilee. Then during the twenty years that followed Shalmaneser twice invaded the land. On the last invasion he besieged Samaria, and after three years captured it, and took all that remained of the nation to Assyria.

Carried into Assyria, the nation of the ten tribes passed out of sight. The imagination of both Jew and Christian has tried in vain to pierce the veil which history has drawn over their ultimate fate. The black Jews of Malabar, the red Indians of North America, the Afghan tribes, have all been set forth as the lost tribes. The latest theory is that the inhabitants of Great Britain are the lost tribes. But where these tribes are no one can tell. A few may have escaped and returned to their native land, or a few may have returned with the Jews from Babylon and have been merged into Judah; but further than this conjecture is idle. The preservation of the ten tribes was not necessary to God or to the covenant of redemption. It was through Judah that the promised Messiah was to come, and it was Judah that God preserved. The training of the ten tribes was calculated to insure their dispersion and complete loss as it did. During the 250 years of their national life they had lived in idolatry, and they were ready now, when carried into a heathen land, to marry and inter-marry with idolaters and thus pass out of sight as a nationality.

## II. JUDAH.

In physical advantages the kingdom of Judah was much inferior to Israel. It had only a fraction of Israel's population. Its territory did not compare with Israel's either for size, for fertility, or for beauty. Yet the career of Judah as a nation was away beyond the career of Israel. It was longer and more brilliant. Unlike Israel, it lived through its captivity. It returned to its native land and reorganized, and continued in Palestine until seventy years after the birth of Christ. Although it has no Government nor country, but is scattered to the ends of the world, the nation of Judah lives to-day, the wonder of the nineteenth century. No nation on the earth is so unified and compact.

The kings of this nation were unlike the kings of Israel. Among them were many good and holy men, men who feared God, and who inaugurated and carried forward thorough reforms. They were such as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

There were at least three influences at work in Judah which were beneficial.

(a) *It had Jerusalem with its holy and thrilling memories.*

This influence for good can scarcely be over-rated. Here was the Temple, which was a witness for God. It constantly issued a call to loyalty to God. It was a unifier of the nation. In Jerusalem David and Solomon reigned. The splendor of their reigns kept the nation loyal to the house of

David for centuries. The writings of these kings were still with the people, and they stirred the people. The memories of David and Solomon fired the hearts of the Jews with patriotism and stimulated them to great deeds.

(b) *It had the power of the priesthood.*

Jeroboam alienated from him the priests and Levites, who were living in the cities throughout the land, and they went in a body to Judah and dwelt in Jerusalem. To them in a great measure were confined the education and refinement of the people. They were the representatives of art and law and religion and general knowledge. They were loyal to God and to his Temple. They kept the sacrifices burning on the altars and secured the defence of prayer. They cultivated and strengthened the spirit of worship in the people and kept them in living contact with the true God.

(c) *It had the prophet-power.*

The function of the prophet was to reveal the will of God to the nation. The prophet was God's witness. His protests and commendations were powers. The people realized that their God spoke through him. Most faithful were the prophets of Judah. They lived in the presence of God and acted always as those who were in his sight. This was the reason they did not see nor fear man in the discharge of their duty. They rebuked sin at the hazard of their lives. In Judah the kings did not antagonize the prophets as the kings of Israel did. There were some of the kings of Judah who did, but these were the exceptions. On this ac-

count the prophets had more freedom, spoke out more freely, and did more effective service in Judah than in Israel. On this account we have more books and writings belonging to the prophets of Judah than to the prophets of Israel. Of the prophets of Israel we have only the writings of Hosea, Jonah, and Amos; and Amos belonged to Judah, although he prophesied to Israel. But of the prophets of Judah we have the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Haggai, and Daniel. The prophets continued a power in Judah until the Captivity, they were a power all through the Captivity, and they were a power after the Captivity. The works of Haggai and Zechariah show this. During this period it was they who kept the knowledge of the true God alive and rekindled the fires of patriotism in the souls of the captives. God lifted one of the prophets to the highest seat in the nation in which they were captives and exiles, viz., the prophet Daniel. He was great and in the chief place under the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, and Darius.

Notwithstanding these three mighty influences which were at work in the kingdom of Judah, still heathenism made inroads and idolatry largely prevailed. For the sin of idolatry God gave Judah into the hands of the King of Babylon, just as he had given Israel into the hands of the King of Assyria, and he carried it captive. Judah should have learned a lesson from the captivity of Israel,



and it did. But the lesson was not so deeply wrought as it should have been. It was soon forgotten. Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah learned wisdom from the awful judgment of the sister nation, but the later kings lived so far from the event that it made but little impression upon them, and the captivity of Judah came. It took place during the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah.

We are not to suppose that the whole nation was taken captive at once and transported to Babylon. As in the case of Israel, there were several deportations. Two deportations are mentioned in 2 Kings, one in 2 Chron. 36:20, and three in the prophecy of Jeremiah. There were at least two large deportations: the first when Jehoiachin and all the soldiers and artificers were carried away; the second and last when the Temple was destroyed and Zedekiah was conquered. All of these deportations took place under Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon.

I imagine you ask for some account of the great and powerful nations which carried Israel and Judah captive, and also for a word of explanation concerning the return of Judah.

Israel was carried captive by the Assyrian nation; Judah was carried captive by the Babylonian nation. What was the difference between these two conquering nations? When Israel was carried captive these nations were one. Babylon was a province of the Assyrian nation. Shortly after Israel was carried captive the Assyrian nation, having accomplished the mission which God had

for it, viz., to act as God's scourge in carrying Israel captive, passed away. The Medes and Persians made an invasion into Assyria and conquered it. Nabopolassar, who was the general of the Assyrian army, proved traitor to the King of Assyria and joined the Medes and Persians. His master sent him to defend Babylon, but the Medes and Persians met him and made a bargain with him. The treasonable bargain was this: the Medes and Persians were to keep the upper part of the empire with Nineveh as the capital, and Nabopolassar was to be king over the southern part which had the city of Babylon as its capital. Thus the Assyrian nation was broken in two and Babylon became independent under Nabopolassar. The son of Nabopolassar, and his successor, was Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon who carried Judah captive. It was he who took Daniel a captive from Judæa and first made him great in Babylon. When the Babylonish Empire carried Judah captive, it would seem that it had accomplished the mission which God had for it, viz., to be his scourge in chastising Judah, so it soon passed away, and on this wise: Immediately after the captivity of Judah, the same Medo-Persian army which destroyed Assyria and gave Babylon to Nabopolassar marched down into Babylon and took it. Cyrus was the leader of the Medo-Persians. In religion Cyrus was a follower of the great Zoroaster. The Zoroastrians were the only religionists of the world, besides the descendants of Abraham, who worshipped but one God and

who hated polytheism, the worship of many gods. When Cyrus took the Babylonian Empire, he was surprised and delighted to find there, in the captive Jews, a people who like himself worshipped only one God. This accounts in part for the great interest which he took in the Jews, and for the favors which he heaped upon Daniel, the great man of the Jews. He continued Daniel in the first place of the land.

What was stranger still, in the writings of the Hebrew prophets Cyrus was named by name. Isaiah foretold that he would set the captive Jews free, and even described the method of taking Babylon which the genius of Cyrus invented. You can imagine how this prophecy stirred the soul of Cyrus when it was unrolled before him. No wonder he interested himself in the Jews, and in the name of the Lord God of heaven issued the decree for their return.

The return disappoints us. Only 50,000 marched under the leadership of Zerubbabel. It is true that there were two other returns, one under Ezra and one under Nehemiah, but the total number that returned only made a fraction of the nation. But God saw to it that this fraction carried in it the family in which Jesus Christ was to be born, and that was the principal necessity of history. That was the one fact that Providence had to guard.

Such is an outline sketch of the two kingdoms whose histories we are about to study. The prospect which this outline presents is not dull. We

see before us some of the grandest characters of the Holy Book and some of the most thrilling events of time. Let us enter upon our work with hope! Let us above all seek the illumination of the divine Spirit who indited these histories, that the books and chapters to be studied may glow with new meaning and flash with attractive and saving truths.

Oh, thou Spirit of Truth, give spiritual eyesight to thy servants so that they may see divine realities clearly, sharply, vividly. Let thy revelations live before them and in them, so that they may always be like glories seen for the first time. Grant that they may ever retain their freshness and interest and influence. Help thy servants to incarnate them and set them before others in colors that burn; and thy grace shall have the glory.

## THE KINGDOM DIVIDED.

"TO YOUR TENTS, O ISRAEL: NOW SEE TO THINE OWN HOUSE,  
DAVID." 1 *Kings* 12:16.

THE product of ages was thrown into wreck by the rough words of a single youth. Rehoboam, a young man, empty-headed, puffed up with pride, devoid of common sense at forty-one, a king only by accident of birth, rent the nation in twain, and the rent was never healed. In one moment he shattered the ideal of Moses and brought to naught the labors of centuries. Oh, the unlimited power of man for destruction! The power of one weak man to pull down and lay in ashes outbalances the power of a hundred strong men to build up. A single rap of the clumsy maid shivers the crystal vase, the exponent of much money and skill. The tiny hands of the child tear in pieces the beautiful flower which it took a year to make and paint. The destructive force of the shallow-headed, short-sighted Rehoboam is more than a match for the united constructive force of all the great men who preceded in Israel. When we realize how great is the destructive power of the weakest of men, we see our need of the constant protection of the omnipotent God. God must stand between us and danger, between the church and danger, between the nation and danger. There is no sure defence short of Omnipotence.



As we take up the story of *the schism of the tribes* we must notice that Scripture sets it before us in a two-fold way: *as the work of man* and *as the work of God*. Both of these facts are true, and they are both needed in order to completeness. The division of the Hebrew nation was the natural outcome of human action, the result of certain social laws; and at the same time it was the result of God's overrule, the infliction of his judgment for the violation of his revealed will.

#### I. THE HUMAN ELEMENT IN THE DIVISION.

(a.) *One cause was tribal jealousy*. This existed especially between Judah and Ephraim. They were both powerful tribes, and were rivals. Ephraim was envious of the honor centred in Judah. This appears as far back as the times of Judges. When in the days of the Judges the other tribes carried on war without him, he grew angry and claimed that he had been insulted by being ignored. This was not true. The other tribes asked him to join them in the war, but because he had not originated and planned the war he said, "No, I will not join you." He thought to humble the tribes. He thought that they would fail without him, and in this way magnify his importance. But they won, and this brought him the humiliating revelation that he was not essential. This revelation stung him to the quick. He declared war against the tribes. But in this war he was defeated, and his pride had another fall. What fools pride and jealousy make of men! How many

Ephraims there are, men who think they are essential! They are too ill-natured to do duty, and they become fearfully mad when others at great cost do it without their help. It is true that Ephraim was united in civil life with the other tribes, under the reign of David and Solomon, but their allegiance was nothing like so hearty as that of the other tribes. Seven years were allowed to pass before David was owned as king, and Ephraim was the last to welcome him back when the rebellion of Absalom was crushed. It was Ephraim's jealousy that made Absalom's rebellion a possibility. The succession of Rehoboam to the throne brought it a new occasion for action. We must emphasize the jealousy of Ephraim, or the human causes of the division of the Hebrew nation will not be understood. Ephraim was sore. The covenant of God confirmed the throne of the nation to Judah, through the house of David, and this struck against his royal ambition. The sanctuary was removed from his territory, from Shiloh, where it had been for over three hundred years, and this robbed him of another prized honor. Ephraim felt that altogether too little was made of Ephraim in the nation, and he was ready for any movement which looked towards his exaltation.

(b.) *Another cause of the division was the oppression under the reign of Solomon.* The reign of Solomon was the golden age of the Hebrew nation. It was devoted to the upbuilding of internal interests. Famous cities were reared, and other cities were inclosed with defences. The royal court was en-

larged, and famous and extravagant palaces were erected. All this cost labor and money. These things meant heavy taxation, and heavy taxation meant cruelty. We of this nineteenth century wonder at the pyramids and the ruins of the vast temples of the past, and we talk of the enterprise and skill of the ages gone by, and of the lost arts; but do not let us forget that these works which call out our wonder are monuments of Oriental tyranny, cruel slavery, enforced labor, and of unnecessary and unjust taxation. According to Pliny 360,000 men had to work twenty years at one pyramid. In the construction of the canal by Mehemet Ali over 300,000 laborers were compelled to work under the lash. Many thousands of these perished through fatigue and hardship. From the reply of Rehoboam to the people in which he said that he would substitute scorpions, i. e., lashes tipped with steel, for his father's simple whips, it would seem that he had reference to the enforced labor by which renowned works were carried forward. The works of Solomon were such as gave the nation renown; but the price at which these works were carried forward was too much for the people. It made Solomon's reign oppressive and tyrannical. When Rehoboam came to the throne the people determined that this system of oppression should be stopped.

(c.) *The cause which brought the division to a climax was the insolent and tyrannical spirit of Rehoboam.* In dealing with Rehoboam the people fell back on the original power which God gave the



king when he inaugurated the monarchy. This power was limited by a constitution. This constitution protected the rights of the people against oppression. Acting according to the original constitution, which Samuel had written out in a book, the people determined to restrict the sway of the king, or else refuse allegiance. With this plan before them, they prepared their Bill of Rights and drew up their petition, and sent for the king to come to Shechem, the chief city of Ephraim. There they presented their petition to Rehoboam, and told him that his coronation over the ten tribes depended upon the granting of it. It would seem that Rehoboam was already recognized as king in the tribe of Judah. Without indorsing the jealousy of Ephraim, our sympathies are wholly with the people. According to our mind they asked only their rights. Theirs was the cause of liberty. They were humane in their method. They resorted to honorable arbitration rather than to the sword. They made fair proposals. They asked for honest and needed reforms and for Scriptural liberties. Some blame them for their revolt; but how could they have acted otherwise? If they had submitted to the insolent Rehoboam, who in after times would have had any respect for their manhood? We look upon the answer which they gave the insulting and enslaving tyrant as a force which has helped the world to its present civil liberty and its present treatment of tyrannical rulers.

There are moments that face us with a sudden

demand, and they manifest the spirit of which we are made and they make or mar our future. Such was the present moment to Rehoboam. He listened to the people and then took their petition under advisement, and told them to come to him at the end of three days for an answer. If he had been a wise man he would have granted the petition on the spot.

The three days were spent by Rehoboam in taking counsel. First he called the old men, who had been sharers in the administration of government with his father. These counselled him wisely. They reasoned from a wide experience. They knew the people, their temper, their rights. They knew how to deal with men. They had been brought up on the wise proverbs of Solomon, and remembered that "a soft answer turneth away wrath." They counselled that Rehoboam accede at once to the petition, humble himself, and be what a king ought to be, viz., the servant of the people. Dissatisfied with their counsel, Rehoboam turned from them to his youthful companions, to those who were one with him. It is human nature to go to our sympathizers for counsel. We naturally like those who think as we do. It bolsters self-conceit, and we are all self-conceited. But sympathizers are poor counsellors; they are one-sided and partial. A man will get more hard facts from his enemies. One enemy, if you can get his true mind, is worth half a dozen friends as a means of seeing yourself as others see you. Like Rehoboam, his young comrades were mere theorists.

They were without a grain of experience. It is the most ignorant people who are the most mulish. They spoke according to his own mind. They talked with contempt about the masses. They grew indignant at their presumption in daring to dictate to him who was born king. They saw in their petition a foreshadowing of future insolence. There would be no end to dictation, if they were not dealt with severely and made to know their places. The young comrades inflamed the feelings of Rehoboam against the people; and so with the sense of an injured man he met them on the third day and gave them a stern reply.

So far as we know, notwithstanding the one thousand wives and concubines of Solomon, Rehoboam was the only son of Solomon. As the only son he was a spoiled child. Brought up in the lap of luxury, he was wholly untractable. Educated as the heir to the throne and accustomed to look down upon the common people, he believed that the people existed to serve the king, instead of the king existing to serve the people. He had not learned the philosophy of ruling, viz., serving. Napoleon rules with a rod of iron—Jesus Christ serves, even to the giving up of his life. Hence Napoleon was soon without a kingdom; but the kingdom of Christ is growing towards universality.

*What was the result of Rehoboam's tyrannical reply?*

The ten tribes immediately set up a government of their own and crowned Jeroboam, a former servant of Solomon.

He was a man of the people and possessed great skill. He had once been the collector of the tribute from the tribes of Ephraim and had championed the rights of the people.

The ten tribes carried with them the great part of the territory and the best of it. The rocky and hilly country only was left to Judah. With the ten tribes were the great multitudes; with Judah was only a small minority. But Judah had this advantage over the ten tribes, it had the prestige of the reign of David and Solomon, which kept the heart of the little nation aflame with heroic memories and which inspired it to great things. It had also the Temple and the holy city of Jerusalem. These proved mighty powers in the future. Besides this, the whole tribe of Levi, which was scattered in the cities throughout the land, came over to Judah. To the Levites in a great measure had been confined the education and refinement of the whole nation: they were therefore a mighty power and a great addition.

## II. THE DIVINE ELEMENT IN THE DIVISION.

The division was the work of man. It was also called the work of God. When God dissuaded the army of Judah from going to war with the ten tribes, at the call of Rehoboam, he said to them through the prophet Shemaiah, "This thing is done of me. War not against your brethren." If we turn back to the days of Solomon, we shall find that God told Solomon that he would divide the kingdom, just as it was now divided. He said



that only one tribe should remain with his son Rehoboam. Again, if we turn to the biography of Jeroboam, the servant of Solomon, we shall find that Ahijah, the prophet of the Lord, made known to Jeroboam the scenes of this day and predicted his coronation over the ten tribes. God many years before gave Solomon the philosophy of the division. It had a moral cause: it was a judgment upon his sin of idolatry. The one true God kept the nation one so long as he was loyally served; but when strange gods were introduced into the nation elements of division were introduced. God told Solomon all about the division. The knowledge of it was part of the punishment of his sin. He was tormented with the vision of the wreck of his life-work. The words of God, "Only one tribe for your son; the rest for your servant," sounded day and night in his soul. Solomon grieved that he sent his son into life fettered and doomed because of his sin. Rehoboam could no more put down Jeroboam, the servant of his father, than Saul could put down David, the Lord's anointed. God was at work in the lamented division of the nation. He was vindicating his honor and putting his stamp of disapprobation upon the heinous crime of idolatry. He was exercising his judgment in the righteous punishment of sin. Yet all the while he was not in any way interfering with the free agency of man. Man was acting out his own will, but at the same time acting out God's predicted purposes.

The part which God took in the division of the

Hebrew nation reveals this fact which is overlooked by men, viz., *God is the greatest factor in history, and his will is the greatest known power.* He walks among the golden candlesticks and rules in the church which he has divinely ordained to be the light of the world; and he moves among the nations and dashes them together like potsherds, and sweeps them aside when it is his will, as easily as a man sweeps the dust from the scales when he is about to weigh. When his law is not honored upon the part of man by willing obedience, he honors it himself by the infliction of his penalties. He regulates every man's life, from the highest to the lowest, from the king to the peasant; and he sees to it that his law is honored in every life by reward or by penalty, according to the character of each life. He will follow sin to the bitter end, even though by so doing he may be compelled to rive in twain magnificent kingdoms. He stands before the world and says concerning the division of the Hebrew nation, "This thing is of me. It is the operation of my justice. It is the evidence that I am on the throne of the universe. It is my beacon of warning to the nations of the earth."

In laying down the history of the Hebrews at this point, let us gather up some of the lessons contained in these facts which have been before us.

#### PRACTICAL DEDUCTIONS.

##### 1. *Parents make an entail upon their posterity.*

This is seen in the heritage which Solomon leaves to Rehoboam. We need to take this fact

and frequently hold it before us. It will make us careful. We are not only living for ourselves, but we are living for the generations that come after us. Our children with their futures are wrapped up in our lives. The reputation which we make for ourselves will affect them. Our sins will affect them. Our fidelity to the truth will affect them. The principles which we hold will affect them. The God we worship, and the way in which we worship, will affect them. What we tolerate and countenance will affect them. All these things descend from us to them as their heritage. The story of Solomon in his relation to Rehoboam should stir us to question ourselves as to the entail which we are preparing for our children. It should incite us to leave them unswerving loyalty to the one living and true God, a pure worship, a pure and Scriptural system of doctrines, earnest prayers, and an estate free from any curse of God. If parents are true to God in every relation of life, if they follow after those things which are Christ-like, they will leave only blessings to their children. The father who leaves to his children simply a rich faith in God does better by his children than he whose ambition is to leave his family a large earthly fortune, accumulated irrespective of what is right and honorable. Ill-gotten, questionable fortunes carry a curse in them which works itself out in the lives of those who are the heirs. They are like Solomon's kingdom with idolatry in it.

Pliny tells this story of the erection of an obe-

lisk in ancient times, which is in point just here. The great stone was to be lifted by the aid of 20,000 workmen. There were fearful risks involved in its erection. The king, at whose instance it was raised, was very anxious about it. He adopted this expedient for securing the attention and interest of the engineer who had the task in hand: he commanded that the son of the engineer should be bound to the apex of the obelisk. The safety of the obelisk meant the safety of his son. The day of erection was an anxious day for the engineer. He carried the life of his boy on his heart during its long hours. This led him to look into every detail. The result of his exceeding care was this: he raised his son to life, for he lifted the obelisk to its place with perfect safety.

Even so God has bound our children to every act of ours, and everything we do tells for their weal or woe. Let the care of the ancient engineer characterize all of our living in its relation to them.

*2. It is important to have right counsellors and to hearken to them.*

Rehoboam's career illustrates this point. He followed the counsel of the inexperienced. He consulted the old men only for appearance' sake. If he had followed the counsel which they gave him, his destiny and the destiny of Israel would have been changed. In seeking counsel he went to those who he knew would echo his own ideas. That is not to seek counsel and light; that is only to shut out the light, and to confirm ourselves in



our own prejudices. In seeking counsel we should go to those who are capable of giving it. We should weigh their words irrespective of our prejudices. We should endeavor to look at things with their eyes and from their standpoint. Many a life would have been saved from wreck if it had followed this course. Living by right counsel is sailing the sea by right charts. It means safety, success, right influence, and honor. It is a good thing to have a Jeremiah for a friend: if we follow his advice, we shall escape the Babylonish captivity. It is a good thing to have a Nathan for a guide: if we follow his directions, we shall find restoration to the paths of righteousness and deliverance from our sinful wanderings. Let us use the light. Let us seek counsellors who will tell us the truth, whether it be palatable or distasteful.

3. *There is a power in gentle words.*

"A soft answer turneth away wrath." Bitter words are like blows in the face. Like cruel daggers, they pierce the heart. More than once in history bitter and hasty words have revolutionized kingdoms and inaugurated bloody wars. A few hot words spoken by Rehoboam rent the Hebrew nation. A few unadvised words spoken by Moses called forth from God his sentence of exclusion from the land of promise. Hot words beget hot feelings and alienate from us the affections of our friends. On the other hand gentle words soothe them, kindle affection within them, and call forth that which is best in their nature. Kindly and gentle words are thus effective and powerful for

good, because they indicate a right and good heart. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Our words set our innermost nature in the light, and this is the reason they tell with others. Right speaking is indicative of high attainments. An inspired writer says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

4. *It is necessary for us to prove ourselves worthy of trust before men will commit to us great interests.*

The Hebrews at Shechem were proving Rehoboam. If he had stood the test, they would have committed the interests of the ten tribes to him. But he did not stand the test. He acted upon the presumption that because he was the son of Solomon, he was entitled to the reins of government and the position of trust. That was his mistake. It is the mistake of many another young man. It makes no difference whose son you are, if you are not worthy in yourself. God requires personal life in order to position and high commissions, and so does man. What you are in the church and in society depends upon what you are in yourself. The men who are personally worthy will always be honored. To them God will give an undivided kingdom, and so will the tribes. Notwithstanding all the revelations of time, and all the sins and follies and mistakes of the world, history shows us that true character and holy and right living win the confidence of men and the blessing of God.

IDOLATRY IN ISRAEL; OR THE SIN OF  
JEROBOAM.

"JEROBOAM THE SON OF NEBAT, WHO MADE ISRAEL TO SIN."  
1 *Kings* 22 : 52.

THIS twenty-second chapter of 1 *Kings* gives us the history of Jeroboam in two forms: in epitome and in detail.

## I. THE HISTORY IN EPITOME.

Ten words! Yes, that is all. "*Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.*" This epitome suggests several instructive things.

(a) *It sets forth the brevity with which Scripture sums up human character.*

You have seen the charcoal artist making his sketches before a public audience. By a few strokes of his crayon he makes a face stand out from the canvas. Six or seven strokes carry in them the outline characteristics of the face, and you recognize at once Butler with his drooping eyelid, or Washington with his look of benignity. As the artist uses a few strokes of his crayon, the Holy Spirit uses a few words, and with these sets before us, not a man's face, but his character. He sums up the personality and net influence of a man in a single sentence. This sentence is an illustration in point: "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." We have other illustra-

tions in the Bible. They are such as these: "Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." "David, the man after God's own heart." "John, the disciple whom Jesus loved." "Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus."

(b) *It illustrates also the fearless courage of the Scripture in telling the truth about a man when it sums up his character.*

In this it teaches us to estimate character rightly. It thus inspires us to call a man's sins by their right names, and to honor a man's virtues even though they may be unpopular. The correct estimate of character is essential to the reign of truth. The right judgment of a man's life is vital to a healthful moral state in society. When John has lived a life especially pleasing to Christ, when he has cultivated a disposition approved by the Son of God, let these things be declared, that the John-type of life may be sought by men and held in estimation. When Judas proves a traitor to his Master and acts as a guide to his Master's place of prayer and discovers him to his murder-breathing enemies, let Judas be lifted up in his true character before the community, lest men be led to think that there is no difference between the Judas-type of life and the John-type of life in point of morality and worth.

Wrong and cowardly estimates of character demoralize and corrupt the community. They shield a false life from deserved odium, and they cheapen the life which has been built up at the cost of self-sacrifice and hard-fought battles.



(c) *It illustrates how the Word of God holds the family responsible for the character of its individual members.*

It holds the parent responsible for the trend and disposition and life of the child. Nebat, the father of Jeroboam, is linked with his sinning son in a dark earthly immortality. When parents neglect the trusts relative to their children, and allow them to turn out badly, there is something judicial in the association of their children's name with their name. The name of Nebat suffers and is lifted into bad eminence by its association with the name of Jeroboam. Each home has a personality and a reputation, and these can be guarded only by taking care of each member of the home. At every wicked Jeroboam the community points the finger of condemnation and cries, "The son of Nebat." Young man, when you sin you not only disgrace yourself, you disgrace your father and your father's home.

## II. THE HISTORY IN DETAIL.

We will bring before us the detailed life of Jeroboam by means of a few queries. We will question the narrative.

*Question I. How did Jeroboam become a candidate for the throne of the ten tribes?*

This question leads us to look into his early history. He was a young man of fine endowments. He was naturally gifted. He had an ambition to distinguish himself. He was brave and enterprising, and not afraid of work. He took



any place and any work as a starting-point and as an opportunity for proving himself essential. He soon attracted the attention of King Solomon, who advanced him to the head of the house of Joseph. It was his duty to see that the house of Joseph contributed its share to the national Government. As the collector of tribute, Jeroboam sympathized with the people. He even offered to join them in inaugurating measures for the reduction of taxes. This gave him a place in the confidence and heart of the people. It was about this time that Ahijah, the prophet of Shiloh, came to Jeroboam, at the direction of the Lord, and rent a new cloak which he wore into twelve shreds and gave ten of the shreds to Jeroboam, and told him that God would divide the Hebrew nation and would give him ten of the tribes as a kingdom. This prophecy acted like a blazing coal to the already kindled ambition of Jeroboam. It set it all aflame. The result of his burning ambition was, he outran the providence of God by inaugurating a secession to divide the Hebrew nation before God's time. God told him that the division should not take place until the death of Solomon, but he thought to produce it in Solomon's day. God's time must be awaited in everything. There is no use in trying to run ahead of it or to push it. He will not let even a Moses anticipate it. Moses may try to secure the liberty of the Hebrews from the cruel bondage of Pharaoh, but if he be forty years ahead of God's time his effort will amount to nothing. He will have to flee to Midian for his life. God will no

more allow Jeroboam to anticipate his providence than he will Moses. The outcome of the premature movement of Jeroboam was his temporary banishment from Israel. He had to flee to Egypt from the wrath of Solomon. When Solomon died, Jeroboam returned and was immediately accepted as leader by the dissatisfied tribes. He led the people when they made their just and righteous demands upon Rehoboam, and he raised the cry of revolt when Rehoboam publicly announced his determination to trample the people down as a horde of slaves.

Immediately after the revolt of the ten tribes from the rule of the house of David, Jeroboam was enthroned as king and began his rule. His first efforts were to strengthen and organize his kingdom. His first step in this line was to select and build a capital for the nation and there construct his court. He selected Shechem, a place already crowned with precious memories, and built it into a strong city, and made it a civil and military rallying-place. Having provided a metropolis for the nation, Jeroboam next gave his attention to the religion of the nation. The religion of the nation is the most important thing connected with its life and prosperity, and this Jeroboam realized at the very beginning of his reign. Up to this point he has succeeded fairly well; now we have reached the crisis of his sinful career.

*Question II. What was the sin of Jeroboam?*

If we are asked to answer the question in a single phrase, we answer, *It was the sin of heresy.*

The original meaning of the word "heresy" is "selection." Heresy has been defined to be the arbitrary selection of doctrines and practices. It is a dictatorial choosing, instead of a dutiful accepting that which God has enjoined. It shows a heart in which God is not supreme. In regulating the religion of the nation Jeroboam chose for himself instead of accepting what God chose. He put his will in the place of God's will. He inaugurated will-worship in Israel. He sinned in this way in four particulars, and they are mentioned in this Scripture.

(a) *He changed the place of divine worship.*

Twice God reminded him in the message of Ahijah that Jerusalem was the one place of the earth where He had chosen to dwell. But Jeroboam said to the people, "You shall not go up to Jerusalem to worship." We know why God chose Jerusalem: he was preparing the world for the crucifixion of Christ at Jerusalem. Anything therefore which diverted the minds and hearts of God's people from Jerusalem was in a measure a stroke against God's great plan of redemption. To put another place in rivalry with it as a place of worship was to distract the minds of men and lessen the interest of the world in the prophecies and purposes of God which centred in Jerusalem. Now Jeroboam put two places in rivalry with Jerusalem, Dan and Bethel. He decreed these as the centres of worship for the ten tribes. Thus he strove to blot Jerusalem out of their thoughts and affections. He did this in order to make the rent between his

kingdom and the kingdom of Rehoboam irreparable.

(b.) *He changed the symbol of the true God.*

This was a step in advance in sin. He made two golden calves, and put one in Dan and the other in Bethel, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up from Egypt." It is utterly impossible to make a similitude of the unseen God, and the divine law has always forbidden the attempt. The whole of the Second Commandment is aimed against it. Perhaps you reply, "The cherubim upon the mercy-seat were a similitude of God." No, they were not. They were simply a symbol of the redeemed universe among whom God dwells. The Shechinah, which dwelt above the cherubim, was the symbol of God. This was the workmanship of God; it came from heaven. It was full of unearthly splendor, and as such was suggestive of the grandest thoughts concerning God. A calf was a human-made symbol and carried with it low ideas of God. At best it was only a symbol of mere power, brute-force. It suggested not the ethical and spiritual attributes of God; these were completely thrown into the background.

(c.) *He changed the divinely-appointed ministry.*

He threw the Levites out of the priesthood and filled their places with men of every tribe who brought the sacrifice which he prescribed. God chose the house of Aaron for the priesthood and confirmed the choice by the budding of Aaron's rod and the destruction of a vast company who



sought to usurp the functions of the priesthood. Appointed by the Lord, the Aaronic priesthood felt their responsibility to God, lived in the presence of God, and performed their services as to God. This made them a mighty power for God in the land. When Jeroboam rejected the Aaronic priesthood and substituted men of his own choice, you see what a change he made in the nation. He took away from it at one stroke a vast power for God, a power calculated to keep the people in the true faith. A Jeroboam-appointed ministry felt themselves responsible only to Jeroboam. They contrasted with a God-appointed ministry, who felt themselves responsible only to God. Jeroboam knew this. He wanted the control of the priesthood, and that was the reason he filled it with persons of his own choice. Controlling the priesthood, he felt that he could maintain a firmer grip upon the nation.

(d.) *He changed the time of celebrating the most important feast of the nation.*

In this he usurped the authority of God. God had instituted this feast and had appointed the time of its celebration. Jeroboam changed the time of the celebration until a month later. This he did in order to divide the feelings of the two nations, and to keep the feast from calling the people of the two kingdoms together. He would not even have them think about the same sacred things at the same time.

It does not take much discernment to discover the result of these religious changes which



Jeroboam introduced. They were such as these: The hold of the people upon the true God was loosened; their conceptions of God were lowered and degraded; their sense of obligation to God was lessened; the sacredness of God's institutions was destroyed; the authority of God's explicit commandments was nullified; they were educated to believe that the human will had as much authority in worship as the divine will. The course of Jeroboam was subversive of all divine authority in the worship of God. It put worship at the mercy of the caprice of man. It opened the way for any and every change which the successors of Jeroboam might see fit to make. It prepared the nation for accepting the gross idolatry which was afterwards introduced by the wicked Ahab.

*Question III. What was the origin of Jeroboam's sin?*

This is a practical question because its answer helps us to understand the working of the human heart; it helps us to self-knowledge. Jeroboam's heart, out of which sprang Jeroboam's sin, was a heart like ours.

(a.) *His sin sprang out of selfism.*

He looked at things from the standpoint of self. He talked thus: "If I allow the ten tribes to go to Jerusalem, the city of God, for worship, if I allow them to be under the same priesthood that the children of Judah are under, the people will come together again and re-unite in one nation as of old; then I shall lose my kingdom and also my life. I shall be the first one upon whom Re-

hoboam will take vengeance." Jeroboam did not ask, "What is the right thing to do?" He asked, "How can I best secure myself on the throne of Israel?" With him, in all that he did, it was nothing but self. If he had loved the right more than self, he would have acted differently. He would have ordered the nation to worship God in the old and divinely-appointed way. He would at least have sent for the prophets of God and have asked counsel from heaven. Self-seeking is to this day the origin of two-thirds of all the sin committed by men. We live and act altogether too much from the standpoint of self.

(b.) *His sin sprang from want of faith.*

He could not trust the God who gave him his throne, so he acted independently of God. His kingdom had a covenant basis. He had as good a claim as David ever had. God had promised to establish him on the throne and to build him a house. If he had only been true to the institutions of worship which God with the greatest care had appointed, God would have made the worship of the people a source of blessing and a means of building up of the kingdom. There are men just like Jeroboam in our day. They cannot trust God's simple gospel and God's ordained methods of Christian work; they undertake to improve upon God's methods. They take religion into their own hands and add to it and subtract from it and popularize the things of religion. They substitute men of genius for men of character in the sacred office; they preach smooth things which are dis-

tated by the human heart in the stead of the heaven-announced doctrines which strike at the very root of evil. And what is the result? They have crowds but not conversions. They have refined fleshly entertainments, but not God-accepted worship. They have concert rooms, but not churches. There is nothing like simple faith in God. There is no true life without it. Faith which will accept all God's appointments without debating them or wishing to change them is the basis of a life which hates sin.

#### THE CHIEF LESSON OF THE CHAPTER.

It is this: *Our worship should be regulated solely by the appointment of God.*

There is nothing in life so important as the worship of God. It makes us what we are. It regulates our conceptions of God. Now to be accepted in heaven worship must accord with God. It is an absolute necessity that it be exactly what God wishes. How can we know what God wishes unless he tells us? How can we rest satisfied that we are acceptable to God unless we worship him in a way which he has appointed? Jeroboam worshipped God; but he worshipped him in a way different from that which God had appointed, and the result was disaster.

In deciding upon the conduct of worship, the question is not what men think, but what God thinks. We are not worshipping men, but God. The question is not what is pleasing and entertaining to man, but what is acceptable and pleasing to

God. Worship is calculated to carry our thoughts away from self and give them to God. Worship is intended to impress great and sanctifying and uplifting truths upon us and to bring us into contact with God's character. Whatever therefore centres our mind and attention upon the preacher or upon the choir or upon the church edifice is a hindrance to worship in that it puts something between God and us. It sends us away from the church service pleased with something human rather than with some attribute of the divine.

I sometimes try to make worship appear to my mind what it ought to be by striving to imagine worship as it is in heaven. I ask myself, "When the saints assemble for worship in heaven do they talk as the saints do here? Do they carry with them to the assembly the purposes and thoughts which we do? Is entertainment their chief idea? Are they swayed simply by the artistic? From what do their thrilling songs of praise spring? What originates those soaring and throne-reaching aspirations and adorations?" The answers to these questions are known. We know what is uppermost in their souls. The glory of God is the chief thing with them. The atoning work of Christ is the uppermost thought. They praise and worship as they do because they are absorbed with the divine. There is no will-worship there. There is nothing of the spirit of Jeroboam. The highest pleasure of the highest and most cultured of heaven's worshippers is the acceptance of the appointments of God.

We may not equal the worship of heaven, but let us do what we can. We can make it our pattern and inspiration. In our worship we can strive that on earth the will of God may be done as it is done in heaven. We can give ourselves up to God in large absorption, and let his glory be first in our souls and the atoning work of his Son chief in our thoughts. We can adhere so truly in our worship to his own appointments, as they are revealed in his Word, that our worship, though offered on earth, shall harmonize with the worship offered in heaven and merge into it as crystal water merges into crystal water without a stain. When the worship of the church on earth is conducted according to God's mind, there is no reason why it should not join the worship of our glorified friends.



## ELIJAH THE TISHBITE.—THE FIRST CHAPTER OF HIS REFORMATION WORK.

“ELIJAH THE TISHBITE, WHO WAS OF THE INHABITANTS OF GIL-  
EAD.”—I *Kings* 17:1.

AMONG the grandest of men, Elijah stands in the front rank. He was the greatest prophet in Israel, and he was the peer of any prophet in Judah. He was majestic and sublime in deeds as Isaiah was majestic and sublime in words. His story has in it the charm of a romance. Poets have come to it for themes, and artists have found in it scenes for the canvas. Even the musician has come to it to find scope for his genius. Mendelssohn's “Elijah” adds to the fame of that German composer, and shows how much there was of the plaintive and the pathetic and the sublime in the character of the prophet and in the stirring scenes through which he passed. The many references made to him in both Testaments show the estimation in which he was held. He was the ideal of greatness among the Hebrew people. “*The spirit and power of Elijah*” was a synonym for the highest possible endowments. When John the Baptist reached the zenith of his career, the chief men of the nation came to him with the question, “*Art thou Elijah?*” The question of identity with Elijah was raised with regard to Christ when his wonderful miracles and words stirred the national heart. Some accounted for his divine

power by the assertion that he was Elijah. From the after reputation of this prophet and from the later Scripture references, one would expect a full and exhaustive history of the man. One would expect to find his biography filling many pages of the Old Testament. But such is not the case. Not half the space is given him that is given Abraham or Joseph or Moses. We are astonished to find that so few of his words are recorded, and to see how few are the days in which he stands forth in prominence. His history is but broken and fragmentary. He speaks for a hurried moment, and then is silent for three years and a half. He is prominent for a day on Carmel, and then passes out of sight. He comes into view again for a day in the wilderness under the juniper-tree, and then we see him no more until the scenes of Horeb, and the rebuke of Ahab, and the call of Elisha, and the ride through the skies in the chariot of fire.

*In this study we are to see Elijah as he appears in the opening chapter of his great reformation work. In this chapter he is presented in three aspects:*

#### I. ELIJAH THE HERALD OF COMING JUDGMENT.

“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.” This is the way Elijah is introduced to the world. There is not a word about his family, his youth, his education. We

see him for the first time a full-grown man, with his convictions formed and burning, his iron will acting, his career in life chosen, and his character fully developed. His first appearance upon the Scripture page is like a full sunburst. He leaps upon the stage of action as a mighty hero, a champion of the rights of God, a reformer of his nation, a terror to the wicked Ahab, and the most loyal patriot in Israel. His very first act shows him to be brave and fearless and straightforward, self-sacrificing, wedded to the highest interests of his country, and thoroughly loyal to God. While nothing is said of his early and previous life, are we wholly without knowledge concerning it? We are not.

*His name gives us a glimpse into his early life.*

It is a compound of two of the names of God, and it means "Jehovah is my God," or "Jehovah is my strength." Scripture names are significant. Sometimes they are a memorial; sometimes they are indicative of a characteristic; sometimes they carry a divine promise or assurance; sometimes they sound the key-note of a man's life. The name of Elijah sounded the key-note of his life. He lived for God, and perfected his weakness in God's strength. His name sets forth his character. If this be so, we can see that his previous life was a religious life. It had to do with God.

*The place to which he belonged instructs us.*

He was a citizen of Gilead. Gilead was a wild, mountainous country. The physical geography of the region where we are reared and educated enters into the construction of our character. There is a

difference between the man brought up on the fertile and luxuriant plain, where the fields when tickled by the plough laugh harvests, and the man brought up among the barren hills, where the storms play and the lightnings fork and the thunder-peals chase each other from mountain-top to mountain-top, where the fields are storm-washed and barren, and where harvests come scantily after long and laborious coaxing. The mountain-bred man is the man of iron endurance. He is fearless in the storms of life. He is a man of disciplined appetites and of severe simplicity. He knows how to say No to self, and he knows how to be in want. He is a man used to isolation and solitude. Elijah was a mountain-bred man; he was a child of the wilderness. When we know this we can picture his early life. It was one of simplicity and severity, hard work and exposure. His early life accounts for his official severity, his pure grit, and his undaunted enterprise. He was in harmony with the solitude of the mountain with which he was familiar from youth when solitary and alone he inaugurated the reformation of Israel, and when Athanasius-like it could be said of him, "Elijah against the world."

*The first words which fell from his lips open to view his previous character and habit of life.*

This is the formula with which he introduces himself to the wicked Ahab: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand." These words show that he was no stranger to God. They indicate that he had studied the claims of God and Baal,



and that he had come to the conclusion that Baal was a fiction, a dead non-existent, a farce; but Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, was the true God, the Author of all, and the sole and supreme Sovereign of the universe. His words show that it had been the habit of his life to act in the sight of God and from a regard to his glory. His life had all along been instinct with a sense of responsibility to God, and he is now acting under a commission from God. God has sent him to Ahab with a merciful warning and with a needed rebuke. Divine judgment is about to seize the land and crush its glory and life, and it is but right that Ahab should be instructed as to the philosophy of the judgment. The first words of Elijah, full of the solemnity of an oath, and instinct with the consciousness of the authority and omnipotence and omniscience and omnipresence of God, tell us how much of a God-man Elijah had been. When we hear a scholar deliver a polished oration, we do not need to be told of his education and early training. His oration is the embodiment of these. When we hear Abraham, at the age of one hundred years, offer his matchless prayer on behalf of Sodom, we do not need to be told that he has been disciplined for years and years in the art of prayer. The prayer which he offers embodies in it his past discipline, and we see it. Elijah, making his first appearance before Ahab as the herald of coming judgment, is his own history. The whole of his early life is embodied in that scene. It is the fruitage of his past sowing.



Look at the prophet of God as he suddenly confronts Ahab and utters that message which makes the ears of Israel tingle. He is a man sinewy and bronzed, a hero of the backwoods, a Nazarite with long hair, a dust-worn traveller with a long sheep-skin mantle or cloak. The way he meets Ahab seems rude and startling and unparliamentary, and it was; for it was intended to shock and alarm Ahab, the hardened sinner, the daring God-defier. Only some such method of approaching him would strike him. He needed that the word of judgment should strike him suddenly like a thunderbolt. This was the thunderbolt: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word."

Was not this a severe judgment? It was. A severe judgment was the need of the hour. Nothing else would be effective in inaugurating a reformation. Only a severe judgment would harmonize with the gross sin which abounded in the land. Baalism, which deifies the powers of nature, is the religion of the land, and the true God is ignored and dishonored. The wealth of the land is being given to an idol. A wicked, idolatrous, God-hating woman is allowed to be the power behind the throne. The foulest rites of idolatry are practised. The altars of God are levelled to the ground, and altars to Baal are substituted in their places. God's prophets are hunted down like wild beasts upon the mountains, and his people are slaughtered by the sword.

Did it not take daring faith on the part of Elijah to utter his prediction? It did. The brooks and rills and springs of the land all laughed at the prediction and made mock. So did the misty and snow-covered mountains. So did the waving harvests and the rustling forests. So did the bejewelled morning. Each pearly dewdrop that hung as a pendant on the countless blades of grass joined in the laugh of derision. But Elijah had for his assurance God's word, and that was enough for his faith. He was as sure of the famine as he was of God's existence. By his faith he saw the invisible, and he spoke of it to Ahab. Ahab doubtless looked upon him as a religious crank, a hot-headed fanatic; for this reason Elijah was allowed to utter his message and leave the royal presence untouched and unhindered. Let Ahab esteem Elijah as he pleases, the prophet has done his duty heroically and has shown himself a man of moral might. By-and-by Ahab and all Israel will find that he is no fanatic, no dreamer, but the representative of God, acquainted with the divine laws which govern the universe, and admitted into God's secrets.

## II. ELIJAH AS THE FUGITIVE OF CHERITH.

The incident of Cherith is one of the thrilling miracles of the Bible. When the famine overtook the land, when dewless night followed dewless night, Ahab in alarm believed in the message of the uncouth-looking man who predicted the drought. When the cry of distress rang in his

ears, he asked, *Where is Elijah?* He would have him stay the famine and bring back the fertilizing dew and rain. But the judgment must run its full course. If it be cut short the people will not realize the awfulness of their sin or reach lasting and genuine repentance. This leads God to put Elijah out of reach. He chooses a hiding-place for him in one of the deep ravines through which the brook Cherith flows. Here Elijah lives for a whole year with a thicket for his home and a turf-plot for his bed. The brook supplies him with drink, and the ravens, at the command of God, bring him a meal every morning and every evening. Ahab's detectives were everywhere in the land searching for him. Into this wild retreat they never thought of entering. They reasoned that a man would starve among the rocks of such a ravine. They knew nothing of the ravens as messengers of God and servants of Elijah. In this retreat Elijah was secure from the wrath of Ahab. Here he was afforded new evidence of God's care and power and supremacy. By communion with God he was fitted for the trying future. We wonder at the great faith of Elijah; we are here taught that it was a growth. It was like the faith of other men: it was the product of much fellowship with God. Elijah, while he was thus secluded, was not left in ignorance as to the progress of the drought. The brook from which he drank brought him the news. The drought struck even it. It was full when he first saw it, but now it has narrowed to a little silver thread.

This thread of water soon breaks and leaves only a pool here and there. Soon the pool sinks out of sight, and the bed of the brook is hot and burning. This compelled Elijah to leave his forest home.

### III. ELIJAH AS THE GUEST OF THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH.

The Lord who commanded him to go to the ravine commanded him to go into the land of Sidon. This command tested the faith of the prophet, for Sidon was the land of Jezebel, the woman who ruled Ahab and defiled Israel. Her father was king of this land. Elijah's faith was equal to the command. He felt that God, who had fed him and kept him in a miraculous way for the past year, could keep him anywhere. Besides this, his very daring was his safety. Who would think of looking for the fugitive prophet in the land of Sidon, the home of Jezebel, and the seat of Baalism which he antagonized?

When Elijah reaches the home of the widow who was to sustain him during the remainder of the famine, he meets with absolute poverty. The provisions of her house have been reduced to a handful of meal in the stone crock and a little oil in the small cruse. Already there are two hungry persons to live on the scrapings of the barrel, and he makes a third hungry person. When Elijah meets the widow of Zarephath she is out gathering sticks to cook the last meal. But Elijah's life is one of faith. The God who fed the fathers with manna will multiply the meal and the oil.



Such is the first chapter of the published life of Elijah the prophet. Now that we have its facts before us let us look at it as a revelation of permanent principles which we should work into the fabric of our lives.

#### PERMANENT PRINCIPLES.

##### 1. *It is God in a man's life that makes it great.*

Elijah was a man of God. If this had not been the case, he would have died unknown. God was to his life what the vital sap is to the life of the tree. The tree when filled with vital sap is robed in leafy glory and is crowned with desirable fruit; but when the vital current is taken out of it, it becomes black and barren and crumbles away. Put God into a man's life and he becomes a Paul, a Stephen, an Augustine, a Luther, a Calvin, a Knox. What men in history can compare with these men of God or with their kindred in the different ages?

God alone is great, and there is no greatness apart from him. Elijah was great, but he was made great through his relation with God. From God he got his ideals. It was trust in God that carried him through the most momentous scenes. It was living in the sight of God that kept him from sin. It was the fear of God that kept out of his heart the fear of everything else. God was a reality to him. Loyalty to God was his motto, obedience to God was his leading characteristic. He never lost sight of this fact: "I am a separated man, chosen of God and devoted to him. My life must be made subordinate to my calling."



2. *God is a constant provider and man is absolutely dependent on him.*

To the wicked this is a distressing fact, but to God's own people it is a joyous fact. They have confidence in God's character and love and unchangeableness. Dependence upon him has in it greater rest and security than dependence upon self. The dependence of man upon God is strikingly set forth in Elijah by the brook Cherith and in the widow of Zarephath. It is perfectly clear that God sent the ravens and that he multiplied the meal and oil. Now both of these incidents are types. They stand for permanent facts. They teach us that we are as dependent upon God as Elijah and the widow were. The ways in which he provides for us are just as wonderful and as demonstrative of supremacy and power as the ways in which he provided for them. Every harvest is his multiplication of the meal; the supply of every olive-tree is God filling up the cruse of oil. The miracles of Cherith and Zarephath only set forth God as the constant miracle-worker and the constant provider. We need to see him once in a while working in a striking way in order to make us recognize and appreciate his constant faithfulness.

There is an Eastern fable of a boy having challenged his teacher to prove to him the existence of God by working a miracle. The teacher, who was a priest, got a large vessel filled with earth, wherein he deposited seed and bade the boy pay attention. In the place where the seed was planted a

green shoot suddenly appeared; the shoot became a stem; the stem put forth leaves and branches, which soon spread over the whole apartment. It then budded with blossoms, which dropped off and left golden fruit. In the short space of one hour there stood a noble tree in the stead of the little seed. The youth, overcome with amazement, exclaimed, "Now I know that there is a God, for I have seen his power." The priest smiled at him and said, "Simple child, do you only now believe? Does not what you have just beheld take place in innumerable instances year after year, only by a slower process? But is it less marvellous on that account?" Year by year Cherith and Zarephath have been repeated. It is God who saves us year by year from famine. It is God that gives us every particle of food that keeps us alive. Our cereal crops are the crumbs from his bountiful table. There is no escape from the necessity of trust in him. The rich man Ahab is as dependent upon him as is the poor man Elijah. The poor man Elijah is as well off as the rich man Ahab.

3. *The limited worldly possessions of the poor do not debar them from noble service for God.*

For the most part God has always used the poor of this world but rich in faith. Elijah was poor; few men in Israel owned less than he. But mark the commission which God gave him and the glorious work which God did through him. The widow of Zarephath was poor, but she was liberal; she gave all that she had to God and his servant. Like the widow of the two mites at the

treasury of the Temple in the days of Christ, she became famous in history. She helped the cause of the Hebrew Reformation by helping Elijah the reformer.

The record of this Scripture does not stand alone in declaring the possibilities of the poor. All history is one with it. It was not men from the mansions of Palestine that carried forward the gospel of Jesus Christ: it was the fishermen of Galilee. It was not King Charles that inaugurated the Protestant Reformation: it was Martin Luther, the son of a Saxon miner. It was not a statesman or a prince that wrote the most useful of uninspired books: it was Bunyan, the Bedford tinker. No man can plead lowly circumstances as a reason for not rendering service to God. If a man have faith, lowly circumstances are no barrier to service. The essentials to service which will bless the world are faith, purity of character, consistency of conduct, surrender of self to God, the possession of the truth, and ability to sacrifice and suffer for the cause of God. Every honest, truthful, kind, generous poor man is a hero of God, and a laborer together with God in building up the kingdom of righteousness.

4. *There are some things of which we may be as certain as we are of the existence of God.*

To Elijah the judgment of wicked Israel was as certain as the existence of God. Hence he could say, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word." There are certainties in our religion,

and we ought to realize this. The truth of every declaration and every threatening and every promise and every word of God is as certain as the existence of God. We should build our faith and hope and conduct upon these as upon sure foundations. The covenant of God is as certain as the existence of God. We should count upon it and upon its blessings. The coming of the kingdom of God in its millennial splendor and fulness is as certain as the existence of God. We should therefore enter into the kingdom and labor persistently for its upbuilding, that we may share its honors for ever and ever. Heaven and hell are as certain as the existence of God. We should flee from the one, and we should seek the other. We should now enter into heavenly associations, build up heavenly characters, and live heavenly lives. God's care of his children is as certain as God's existence. Let us therefore trust his fatherhood and rest in his care. Our Father carries the key of the storehouse of the universe, and he will not let us lack.



ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL;  
OR THE RELIGION OF GOD TESTED  
AND FOUND TRUE.

"AND WHEN ALL THE PEOPLE SAW IT, THEY FELL ON THEIR FACES: AND THEY SAID, THE LORD, HE IS THE GOD; THE LORD, HE IS THE GOD."—1 *Kings* 18:39.

YOU know the antecedent history. Ahab the King of Israel married a wicked woman named Jezebel. She was a Phœnician idolater, a worshipper of Baal. She was an ancient Lady Macbeth. She was Lucretia Borgia and Catharine de' Medici in one. Through her slaughter of the prophets of God the true religion was dethroned in Israel, and the corrupt, licentious religion of Baal was substituted in its place. It was not to be expected that the reigning God, Jehovah, who made Israel a nation, would submit to this. He had better things for Israel, and by righteous judgments he determined to bring his chosen people into these better things. He sent a famine into the land which lasted three years and a half. During all that time the sun blazed in the heavens like a ball of fire; the atmosphere quivered like the air in a heated furnace; there was scarcely a moist rock or a rill or a spring of water in all the land. Dismay fills every heart and consternation sits on every face. The cattle are drooping, the children are crying, and men and women are fast becoming walking skeletons. As we try to reach an adequate idea of the scene we recall Mendelssohn's oratorio,



“Elijah.” It opens with a wondrous passage, which tries to represent the despair of a whole nation perishing from thirst. After giving the despair vent at first in sullen, restless murmurings, it pictures it as gathering at length a terrible cumulative strength which bursts forth in appalling cries of heart-rending, importunate agony. Only the genius of a Mendelssohn, who had at his command the world of sound, dare try to picture a nation in the agonies of thirst.

When judgment had wrought its perfect work, and when the nation was ready to enter with downright earnestness into a search after a knowledge of the true God, Elijah the prophet proposed a convocation and designated Carmel as the meeting-place. When the day of meeting came he bravely stepped upon the scene and opened his address with a searching question, which contained in it a charge of indecision and disloyalty and a lack of common sense. Edmund Burke said he did not know how to draw up an indictment against a whole nation; but Elijah did. Here is his indictment: “How long halt ye between two opinions? If Baal be God, follow him; but if Jehovah be God, follow him.” Under the prophet’s charge of indecision and disloyalty the Israelites were dumb. They were speechless from conscience; they were silent from guilt. Thus it always is. Indecision and disloyalty in religion have no defence. God has constructed us with faculties which make decision a law of our very nature. On any important and essential thing in-

decision is unrest and torment to a thinking, reasoning, conscientious man. I am talking to your inner life.

But how shall Israel know who is the true God? That is the question, and Elijah suggests a method of arbitration for his answer. He suggests a test of works. The tree is to be known by its fruit; a man is to be known by his character; God is to be known by his works. God-like acts prove deity. Elijah makes this proposition: "I stand alone as the prophet of Jehovah. Here are four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, a mighty prayer-power, if Baal be a prayer-hearing god. Let them slay and dress a victim and put it on their altar, and I will slay and dress a victim and put it on God's altar. We will not put any fire under the sacrifice. They may call upon Baal to send fire down from the sky to consume their sacrifice, and I will call upon Jehovah to send down fire from the sky and consume my sacrifice. All this shall be done openly in your presence, and the God that answereth by fire, he shall be God." This proposition seemed so fair that the people accepted of it at once. They said, "It is well spoken." And it was well spoken. You would have accepted of this method of arbitration and so would I. Everything is now ready for the contest between Elijah, the prophet of God, and the 450 prophets of Baal; and the people are present as a jury.

As we look at Elijah throwing down the gauntlet, we see in him a hero full of magnificent faith and boldness. But is he not too venturesome?

Is he not guilty of presumption? Does he not take risks that are too awful? Is it not an unheard-of thing for God to hurl fire from the skies? To a man of little faith it would seem as though Elijah were putting the credit of Jehovah's worship into fearful risk and imperilling everything; but to Elijah's strong faith nothing was imperilled except Baalism. The Prophet of Fire was not surprised to see fire leap from the sky. He would have been surprised if God had withheld fire. He was not treading in an unwarranted way. He was not expecting God to do an unprecedented thing. God often had hurled fire from the skies. He rained a storm of fire upon the cities of the plain. He threw fire around the bush of the desert and talked from out of it with Moses. By fire he answered the transgressions of Nadab and Abihu, by fire he burnt up rebellious Korah and his company; by fire he answered Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. Elijah knew all this. Jehovah had shown himself to be the God who answers by fire, and Elijah had precedent upon which to base his strong faith and grand venture. Besides this, according to his own words, he was acting in all these matters under the bidding of God. He who follows a commandment of God runs no risk. It is no risk for Gideon's three hundred to hurl themselves against the countless hosts of Midian. It is no risk for the Israelites to attack the massive walls of Jericho with ram's horns. It is no risk for the mother of Moses, in the exercise of her faith, to put her babe upon the waters of the Nile.

When the decrees of God stand between us and danger we are safe as God himself.

I am not going to tell the story of the failure of the prophets of Baal; I stop only to say that they failed, and failed ignobly. In the end every false thing fails. This is one of the axioms in the mathematics of history, one of the certainties of the universe. A false face, a false character, a false credit, a false religion, will always prove valueless in the day of testing and scrutiny.

We see Elijah now at his best. He rises to the occasion; he is conscious of his solitariness, but that does not intimidate him; he knows that he is alone, a single man against the political and religious power of the nation, but he acts heedless of the fact that the majority is against him. His motto is, One man with God is a majority. Carefully and reverently he gathers together the fragments of the broken-down altar of Jehovah, and selecting twelve stones, he rebuilds it in due form. As these actions were symbolical, he spoke to the people through them. By the twelve stones, which represented the twelve tribes of Israel, he declared to the people that God's children should everywhere be one in their worship; by the altar itself, which was a parable in stone, he rebuked Israel for worshipping any God save Jehovah; by repairing the old altar, instead of building a new one, he declared to the people that he was the restorer of the law and of the true and ancient worship of the fathers. Having finished the altar, he dug a trench around it; then he slew a bullock and



dressed it and laid it on the altar. After this, to make the miracle of igniting the sacrifice all the greater, and to put faith to the greatest strain, he had strong men carry large water-jars full of water and pour on the altar and on the sacrifice. They poured jarful after jarful until the trench was overflowing and until everything was saturated and dripping.

When this was done Elijah quietly knelt by the unlit altar and made his appeal to Jehovah in prayer. He talked with God as a child would talk with his father. His prayer was earnest. The whole fire and fervor of his great soul was in it; still it was not frantic, like the prayer of one who fears that he may not be heard. It was instinct with the glory of God and the good of Israel. There was no wild gesture about it, no multiplied cries, no vain repetitions; it was full of faith and experience, it was brief and to the point. He asked God to manifest his existence and to claim the homage that was his due; he asked God to certify him as His prophet, and in this way win back the hearts of the people. Clear and distinct his voice was heard, and this was the prayer that fell upon the ears of the attentive throng: "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again." As the prayer ascended, the fire fell. A bolt



charged with intense burning flashed through the sky. Every eye saw it and every soul felt the darting brightness of its Shechinah-like blaze. A wave of heat which followed it swept over the multitudes and sensibly struck every cheek. When the heavenly bolt smote the altar there was a loud hiss as the fire and water met; then a swift cloud of vapor floated up and out into the air; then a thick cloud of smoke, into which the victim had been transformed, rolled heavenward; and then the usual odor of burnt sacrifice filled the atmosphere. All this transpired in less time than it takes to put the description of it into words. When smoke and vapor passed away nothing was seen but the kneeling prophet of God. There was neither sacrifice nor altar visible. Everything had been consumed by the piercing, intense heat of the divine fire which fell red-hot from the cloudless sky. The very altar had been pulverized; the very stones had volatilized and disappeared. God's work was a complete work, and the vindication of Elijah's religion was a complete vindication. Grandly was Elijah's faith crowned, and that in the presence of the people and to their complete satisfaction.

It is easy to forecast the effect of this wondrous miracle. The court and the priesthood trembled; conflicting emotions shot and reshot through the souls of the countless spectators; the vast crowds were overawed; instantaneous conviction took hold of the great majority. The people were deeply impressed and a revulsion of feeling swept

over them and through them; they felt that the grand old days of the fathers had come back to their nation. For a moment the silence of the grave hung over Carmel; it was a portentous silence like that before a storm-blast. It seemed a long, long silence, for there was terror in it, but it was soon broken, and broken instantaneously. For the convicted and converted people, swayed by emotions which were bound to express themselves, as one man lifted up their voices and cried, "Jehovah, he is God! Jehovah, he is God!" That glad cry of faith rent the air and echoed from summit to summit along the mountain range of Carmel, and peak after peak caught up the words of the cry and threw them back—"Jehovah, he is God! Jehovah, he is God!"

Such is the history which gives us our theme; the eternal facts embodied in the history are these:

#### I. GOD'S RELIGION WILL BEAR TESTING.

Elijah tested it when he put Jehovah and Baal side by side. Comparative theology is testing it to-day. As the followers of Jesus Christ we can put Christianity side by side with any of the ethnic religions without fear. It is our privilege to prove God and his truth at any time, and we cannot test him in his own way without receiving an answer which will lift from the depths of our heart the cry, "The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!"

Our religion appeals to man as a rational being. It invites testing and scrutiny. But in testing and

scrutinizing it, it is only fair and reasonable that we should be honest and should have high aims. We must be earnest seekers of the truth. God gives no promise to triflers, and why should he? Men do not declare and defend their grandest purposes and principles before triflers. Nobody in heaven or on earth has any respect for a trifier. If an architect of Boston were building a house on one of our streets, he would not open his plans and specifications to a curious loungee who happened to have time upon his hands to while away. Why should he? But let a student of architecture, a young man with a worthy object before him, or let a man who is in search of some one who may build him just such a house, come to him, asking a true insight into the plans and specifications, and the architect gives his whole mind and energy to the task of opening up everything. Christ deals with inquirers in a manner similar to this. The Pharisees, heaping contempt upon what he has said and done, come to him and ask a sign from heaven. They are triflers. They do not come to him in the right spirit. They ignore the many and convincing signs which are all around them, and because of this Jesus says to them, "There shall be no sign given you. Your spirit is wrong, your intention is wrong, you are trifling with me." While he denies them, see how he treats humble followers and seekers after the truth! Contrast his treatment of the embassy which comes from John the Baptist with his treatment of the proud and haughty Pharisees. He gives this embassy

sign after sign. He multiplies miracles before their eyes; he heals the sick, he gives sight to the blind, he cleanses the leper, he even raises the dead, and thus overpowers them with proofs of his deity and of his identity with the promised Messiah. In the testing of God and his religion men must be honest if their testing is to prove effective and profitable.

## II. IT IS EVERY MAN'S DUTY TO TEST GOD'S RELIGION.

Religion will bear the test; that is one point. It is every man's duty to test religion honestly; that is another point. Have we all tested it? Have we dealt fairly and candidly and honestly with Christianity? Has the Christian religion received the thought and study which are its due and which the interests of the immortal nature of man demand? If you are not an out-and-out Christian, so far as you are concerned it has not. If you are not an active member of the Christian Church, so far as you are concerned it has not. The great duty of your life is yet before you, and to that duty I call you, as Elijah called Israel. Test the religion of God.

### (a.) *Test Christianity's Christ.*

Christ is Christianity. He embodied his teachings and principles in his own life. He lived his religion. He was truth. He was light. He was love. He was honesty.

You have been dealing with his disciples; deal with him. His disciples often misrepresent him.



By their imperfections, honest as their intentions may be, they obscure his glory and alter the tone of his religion. Even the very best of his disciples do so. A simple story from his biography will illustrate this. On one occasion mothers brought their children to have him take them up in his arms and bless them. But his leading disciples stood between Christ and the mothers, saying, "Trouble him not; take the children away." What a misrepresentation of Christ's interest in children! Had that misrepresentation of Christ prevailed it would have changed the whole destiny of the Christian religion. But Christ did not let it prevail; he corrected it on the spot. He uttered these precious words which have broadened his kingdom and enthroned him in the home, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." If you want to know Christianity, deal with it *first hand*; deal with its Christ. He stands as the great power and defence of our religion. Infidelity may build fortresses against Christianity out of the inconsistencies of Christians; it may even spike the guns of apologists; but the holy and perfect character of Christ is a bulwark against which it dashes itself in pieces every time it clashes with it. I have all confidence in Christ. There is not a man who will deal with him honestly and thoroughly but will feel the thrill that is in his life and will be humbled before the majesty and purity and love of his unspotted nature. If you are not an open Christ-man, the reason is you



do not know Christ ; you have never put yourself under his transforming influence.

(b.) *Test Christianity's works.*

See what Christianity has done and is still doing in the world. Compare Christian lands with pagan lands. Ask yourself in which lands you would prefer to live and which civilization of all civilizations you would choose. Facts are lamps by which we see Christ and his religion. You choose the products which Christ and his religion have given the world. Why not choose the causes of these? Can you give an intelligent reason why not? Standing in the nineteenth century we can confidently appeal to the products of the gospel as a proof of the worth of the gospel and as an establishment of its claims.

This is the way intelligent and fair-minded men judge it. Let me quote just two instances ; let me present the words of living men who stand high in our own land. I am glad of their testimony, for it is the testimony of candid students.

I quote from the words of Chauncey Depew, who so nobly answered Julian Hawthorne at one of the meetings of the Nineteenth Century Club in New York. These are his words :

"I confess I do not understand these evangels of free thought, who claim to do so much for the wide world through their scientific and sociological associations. London has these associations, but the poor and needy and lost of London know nothing about them. But they do know some-

thing about the churches of Christ. These evangelists of free thought use a language of strange terms and beautiful generalities which convey no meaning to me. They would tumble down my church and bury my Bible and destroy all the foundations of faith, but they would offer only in return words and terminologies as mixed as chaos and as vague as space. I understand my Bible. I understand Christian charity and Christian education. I understand the doctrine of fears and rewards, and how it arouses and keeps in exercise a healthy conscience. I know what Christianity has done and what it is doing. I know what the Christian religion has been to this nation, and what civilization it produces when it is allowed a sway. A better society never has been and never will exist than that in New England for its first one hundred and fifty years, when the whole life was dominated by the family Bible."

Here is a candid man testing Christianity by its works, and his verdict is, "The Lord, he is God."

I quote next the words of our late Minister to England, James Russell Lowell. Being called upon to make an after-dinner speech, it fell to his lot to follow one who had indulged in flings at Calvinism and the Bible. He was brave enough to utter these words:

"Whatever defects and imperfections may attach to a few points of the doctrinal system of Calvin, the bulk of which is simply what all Christians believe, it will be found that Calvinism, or

any other ism that claims an open Bible and a crucified and risen Christ, is infinitely preferable to any form of polite and polished skepticism which gathers as its votaries the degenerate sons of heroic ancestors who, having been trained in a society and educated in schools the foundations of which were laid by men of faith and piety, now turn and knock down the ladder by which they have climbed up, and persuade men to live without God and leave them to die without hope. When the microscope of skepticism, having hunted the heavens and sounded the seas to disprove the existence of a Creator, shall have turned its attention to human society and found a place ten miles square where a decent man can live in decency, comfort, and security, supporting and educating his children unspoiled and unpolluted, a place where age is revered, infancy appreciated, manhood respected, womanhood honored, and human life held in due regard—when skeptics can find such a place ten miles square on this globe where the gospel of Christ has not gone and cleared the way and laid the foundation and made decency and security possible, it will then be in order for the skeptical literati to move thither and there ventilate their views. But so long as these very men are dependent upon the religion which they discard for every privilege they enjoy, they may well hesitate a little before they seek to rob the Christian of his hopes and humanity of its faith in that Saviour who alone has given to man the hope of life eternal, which makes this life tol-

erable and society possible, and robs death of its terrors and the grave of its gloom."

Here is another leader of thought testing Christianity by its works, and his verdict is, "The Lord, he is God."

III. WHEN MEN, BY HONEST TESTING, FIND THE RELIGION OF GOD TO BE TRUE, IT IS THEIR DUTY OPENLY AND FEARLESSLY TO CONFESS THIS TO THE WORLD.

There should be no delay in this duty. It should be performed at once. Elijah worked for instantaneous conversion and instantaneous confession. This is apparently so, and yet what seems instantaneous here was not after all instantaneous. In reality this conversion of Israel was the result of long years. The memories of the past were in it. Years of reasoning and of appeal were in it. Men often say, during excitements of religious fervor, that actions committed in haste will be repented of at leisure; that it is not fair dealing with great multitudes to ply them with hymns and prayers and preaching, and compel them to determine before they leave the house that they will live a Christian life. They claim that it is a precipitancy from which there will be a rebound. In the great majority of cases it is not precipitancy. It is simply bringing the man to do what all along he has felt it to be his duty to do. In an instant the heart and conscience and the whole moral sense of the people went out to the prophet; but it would not have been so if



Israel had not had its past history and training. Elijah did not precipitate things when he led the people into faith and into a public confession of their faith during a single religious service.

To all who read this page I would say, "Decide for Christ now." Do not say, "This is pushing things too rapidly and calling for a too hasty decision." Hasty decision! It is not possible for a single reader to make a hasty decision. Some of you have been revolving this decision for five years; some of you have been revolving it for ten years; some of you have been revolving it for fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years. If you should decide here and now, this very moment, it would only be bringing the thought and purpose and conviction of a long past to a legitimate and a grand climax. A decision for God and Christ and the church on your part, here and now, a hasty decision! The thought is the suggestion of the arch-enemy of souls. Such a decision on your part, here and now, would be the most deliberate act of your life. O immortal soul, Christ has been waiting for you to own him these many and long years. You have thought the matter over and over, and there is not one thing to be gained by thinking it over any longer. By the absolute surrender of yourself to Christ, join this very hour the multitude of his convinced ones, and with the sacramental hosts of God's elect send out your cry into the dome of humanity, "The Lord, he is the God! The Lord, he is the God!"



## THE DISCOURAGED PROPHET; OR ELIJAH AT HOREB.

"AND ELIJAH WENT A DAY'S JOURNEY INTO THE WILDERNESS, AND CAME AND SAT DOWN UNDER A JUNIPER-TREE; AND HE REQUESTED FOR HIMSELF THAT HE MIGHT DIE." 1 *Kings* 19:4.

THE story is a dark surprise. The man who has up to this point walked through history a great craggy soul, is now prone on his back, a moral and spiritual collapse. His mind is overshadowed by grief and his whole personality is shaken by a paroxysm of despair. The sight is sad, but it is instructive. It shows that Elijah was a man of like passions with ourselves. It teaches that this man who has overawed us by the ventures of his faith was built up by the Spirit of God out of just such spiritual stuff as we are.

There are two things upon which we wish to dwell in dealing with this relapse of the prophet. These are:

### I. THE REASONS FOR HIS DOWN-HEARTEDNESS.

His relapse is usually attributed to the murderous threat of Jezebel.

When Ahab returned to the palace from the thrilling scenes of Carmel, he had to submit to a cross-examination by his wife. He went out with 450 priests: he returned alone. She asked, "Where are my four hundred and fifty prophets who went forth with you?" When he had told

her all, instead of believing in Jehovah, who had wrought wonders that day, she denounced the miraculous fire from heaven as a wily trick of the subtle old Elijah, and called her husband a silly dupe. The story of her husband, instead of converting her, exasperated her, and when he told her how Elijah slew her priests she could contain herself no longer.

In their slaughter she heard the cry, "*Down with Baalism!*" In it she saw that Jehovah would not tolerate her nor her ancestral faith, so she determined she would not tolerate Jehovah nor his prophet. Her only thought was one of revenge. Reckless and desperate, she shrieked out her diabolic purpose against Elijah, and sent him this red-hot message: "*So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time!*"

It was a very imprudent thing for Jezebel to forewarn Elijah; but she was too furious to be wise. Her anger was so hot and so full that to threaten was a temporary relief, and relief she must have. It is a good thing that some people get so beside themselves, for they give themselves away and defeat their wicked purposes, like Jezebel, and they let out their plans by their threats.

While it is customary to say that the threat of Jezebel was the cause of Elijah's depression and flight, we must guard against mistake. We must not ascribe too much to Jezebel's threat. She had often threatened, but Elijah did not flee nor give way to dejection. We shall not understand

the origin of Elijah's dejection unless we look deeper than Jezebel's threat. The causes were in Elijah himself. They were such as these:

(1.) *Physical and nervous exhaustion.*

The man was worked down. The strain of Carmel made a heavy draft upon his nervous system. He rebounded from overstrain into collapse. He was in a physical and nervous condition familiar to all who know what it is to be completely and utterly tired. The slightest noise is a shock. The shutting of a door is like the report of a cannon. Every little annoyance rasps the nerves. The natural equipoise has been lost. In the heat of devotion Elijah did not notice his fatigue. He was not conscious of the wear to which he was subjecting himself in his all-day work at Carmel and in his evening twelve-mile race before Ahab's chariot. The fact is that when he reached the deepest point of his dejection he was ignorant of its cause. He did not see that the cause was *more physical* than spiritual. He supposed that it was altogether spiritual. The relation between body and soul is mysterious, but real, and it must be regarded. The body affects the mind and darkens the spiritual firmament of the soul. It sometimes happens, therefore, that we need the physician's prescription more than we do sermons and prayers.

(2.) *The result of reaction.*

The believer's greatest peril often meets him when he passes from one experience to another, and especially when he passes from his highest privileges and honors. Elijah had been highly

honored on Carmel the day before. As a reward for his fidelity he had been lifted to the highest point on the mountain of fame. There are risks in coming down the mountain to the plain of everyday living. There is quite a difference between the shout, "Jehovah, he is the God!" and the threat of Jezebel. If he had not been the victor of Carmel, he would not have felt the difference. If the threat had fallen upon him three years before, when he was the fugitive of Cherith, it would not have cost him a moment's anxiety. When passing from high and notable experiences of the religious life, the child of God needs to be especially guarded and careful, else like Noah he will pass from the ark into drunkenness; else like Peter he will pass from bold and earnest confession and from the Lord's table into aggravated denial of Christ; or else like Elijah he will pass from Carmel to the juniper-tree. Many a believer, like Paul after his trip to the third heaven, needs a thorn in the flesh to save him from spiritual disaster.

(3.) *Want of work and want of sympathy.*

The task of Carmel was over, and Elijah was like a man out of employment. For this reason his purposes were not steadfast like those of a man whose energies are all centred in a God-given mission. Nothing could have forced Elijah to flee when he had the convocation of Carmel upon his hands.

Besides being out of work, he was lonely. He needed companionship. He had the heartache



which comes from the want of sympathy. "His whole mission was a heavy secret lying like ice upon his heart." He needed some friend to think for him in his present state and to join with him in prayer. Such a companion would have saved him from the juniper-tree. He was like Peter without his John, like Luther without his Melancthon, like Calvin without his Beza.

Companionship, with its refreshing fellowship and invigorating sympathy, is the demand of human nature. No man is above it. The great Paul was not. The friendships which he formed with Timothy and Titus strengthened him. Jesus, the perfect man, was not. He had his bosom friend and those whom he kept close to him. He could neither go to his transfiguration glory nor to his Gethsemane agony without taking with him his chosen three. When we remember the craving of human nature for sympathy, and when we recall the loneliness of Elijah, we see in his loneliness one of the causes of his depression.

## II. THE ESCAPE FROM HIS DOWN-HEARTEDNESS.

God came to the prophet's rescue. He cared for him as tenderly as a mother cares for her afflicted child. Elijah fled, but God followed him. God knows where all his children are: Jacob at Bethel, Jonah on the sea, Moses at Midian, John in Patmos, and Elijah under the juniper-tree. He knows everything about them. Not a thought or mood of theirs can escape him. If God watches our moods, we should watch them too and guard



them. They affect our lives and tell in the moulding of our characters. We should watch them, because we can control them and discipline them. When our moods are rightly disciplined we shall be brave-hearted and able to meet ridicule and scorn and threats and undervaluation and loneliness and temptation to dejection.

This history brings out the tenderness of God and his wonderful care over his dejected prophet. He treated him as a skilful physican treats his patient. He diagnosed his case and prescribed accordingly. The medicine which he administered suited exactly. It reached the disease.

How does God lift Elijah out of spiritual depression? He removes the cause.

(1.) *He recuperates the exhausted body.*

He begins with the physical man. He gives him deep and refreshing sleep, and in this way restores the equilibrium of the nervous system. After this he sends him two full meals by the hand of his angel, and he so blesses these meals that they nourish the prophet for forty days. It is God's blessing which makes our food sustaining and nutritious. His curse can turn the richest viands into poison and death, but his blessing can make the crust a life-sustaining force. God treated Elijah with a compassion like that which Jesus showed to the multitudes in the wilderness. He refused to send them away fasting after a day of earnest listening to his holy teachings, lest they might faint by the way, and lest bodily exhaustion might destroy the effect of spiritual teaching.

Even the Son of God himself will fail as a preacher if the bodily conditions of his congregation be not right and healthful.

(2.) *He brings the prophet to a sense of his responsibility by means of a searching question.*

When the body is made right God deals with the mind. He brings the prophet to himself. He compels him to think. He puts him upon his defence. He shows him that he is not where he ought to be and that he has no divine warrant for his present course. By this simple question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" he compels the prophet to deal with himself, to justify himself or to rebuke himself.

(3.) *He gives him a new view of God.*

He grants him the theophany of Horeb. By a vision he opens the divine nature and gives him an insight into the divine method of procedure. He treats him as he treated Moses when, discouraged by the sins of Israel, he cried, "I beseech thee show me thy glory."

The scenes which he witnessed at Horeb were a magnificent "object lesson." He was instructed by the symbolism of nature. The scenes were an acted parable which he well understood. *This was the drama of the wilderness.*

A hurricane came shrieking through the ravines of the mountains, leaping through the gorges, and tearing off huge fragments on every side. Then followed the crash of an earthquake, making the mighty peaks and mountain-tops sway and rock on their foundations. After this came the peals

of an awful thunderstorm, which reverberated through the mountain defiles. After all this, and in contrast with it, came an impressive silence, and out of the silence there came "*a still small voice*," which Elijah felt to be the voice of God. To him there was more of God in that still small voice than there was in the awe-inspiring phenomena of hurricane and earthquake and lightning, and there was. There is more of God in the whispering of conscience in the stillness and darkness of midnight than there is in the thunders of war or in the sweep of desolating judgments.

The lesson which Elijah was taught was this: Do not trust in the things which stun and bewilder; do not expect God to work always after the Carmel type. This is not the most effective way of working. This is not the way in which God chooses to work as a rule. "Judgment is his strange work." Be content to adopt quieter means. Let the mercy of God, seen in the refreshing rains and returning harvests, work for Jehovah among the people and declare that he is God. Be content now to lay aside the thunderbolts of judgment and use the words of promise and mercy in dealing with Israel. Draw them to God from this time on instead of trying to drive them to God. You yourself have felt the power of the still small voice; use it in the conversion of Israel. Now that the wonders of Carmel have arrested the attention of the nation, deal with it in the persuasive words of love.

God showed Elijah that he expected too much

from excitement and from the terrifying. It is the quiet influences that tell—the quiet, earnest, godly, consistent character in the Christian life, the quiet, still dew and the silent sun-ray in nature. It is as God taught Elijah. The silent power is the effective and lasting power. It is the earnest, quiet, divine love of the cross that is to regenerate the world and bring it into subjection to God, and not judgment nor sweeping pestilence nor the bloody sword.

(4.) *He answers the prophet's craving for sympathy and commissions him to further service.*

The prophet felt that he was alone; so God gave him Elisha as a companion, and told him of the seven thousand who hated Baal and who were one with him in loyalty to Jehovah. These seven thousand were praising God every day for the heroic consistency and leadership of Elijah. Elijah was reproducing himself in them. God hid them away from the wrath of Jezebel just as he hid away the Waldensians among the crags of the Alps.

Elijah was out of work, so God gave him a new task. He told him to go and anoint Hazael king of Syria in the stead of Ben-hadad, and Jehu king of Israel in the stead of Ahab, and Elisha prophet in Israel as his own successor. Thus by work he protected him against brooding over what he called his failure. The work which God gave him to do also opened to him the future. There was a future for Israel and for God's purposes with regard to Israel. All this was uplifting to Elijah.



It made a new man of him, and when next he appears in history he is the old fearless hero of God, facing royalty and denouncing sin in the palace.

## LESSONS.

1. *The care and culture of the physical man is a religious duty.*

God teaches us this by caring for the physical man of his prophet. The body is the temple of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and we are to keep it from being defiled or maltreated or neglected. We are to keep it in temperance, soberness, chastity, from the heat of lust, and from the wear of over-exertion. Our fitness for the worship of God is in large measure bodily fitness, and we are verily derelict before God when we do not secure that fitness. What saint's rest is there for a man in the agony of dyspepsia which he has carelessly brought upon himself by irregular and unwholesome diet? To say nothing of material food, what gospel can that man relish or what gospel can he preach? Viewed from any standpoint, the neglect of sanitary laws is an out-and-out sin. Hygiene is an angel of God both to the soul and to the body of man. It aids health of body and spirituality of soul.

2. *There is a power in honest, God-appointed work.*

So long as Elijah kept at work he was strong and happy. There is a quaint legend about the apostle Thomas which illustrates this. The legend runs: He fell to doubting again about the resurrection of Jesus. In the agony of his doubts he



went to his fellow-apostles to pour his story into their ears; but they interrupted him and said, "Thomas, we are sorry for you, but we are so busy that we have no time to give you." He went next to the believing women. He said to himself, "They are more tender-hearted than the men; they will listen to me and discuss with me my trouble." He opened himself up to them with much greater fulness. But even they, tender-hearted as they were, stopped him in the midst of his story and excused themselves from hearing him to the end by declaring that pressing duties called. And the man was left alone with no Christian to whom he could unburden himself. Compelled to talk with himself and to comfort himself, he struck upon this line of thought as he mused: "Perhaps the reason these people have no doubts to harass them as my doubts harass me may be just this which I see with mine own eyes: they are so busy." Acting upon the hint, he immediately went to Parthia and began the work of preaching the gospel, and he found that his conjecture was true. Hard work kept him from ever doubting again. The story is a legend, but it contains a fact for all time, namely, the busy man makes the best Christian.

## AHAB'S COVETOUSNESS; OR RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.

"THUS SAITH THE LORD, IN THE PLACE WHERE DOGS LICKED THE BLOOD OF NABOTH SHALL DOGS LICK THY BLOOD, EVEN THINE."  
*1 Kings 21:19.*

THE story of Naboth reminds us of some of the tragedies and characters of Shakespeare. If Ahab and Jezebel had never been given a place in the Bible, we question whether Shakespeare would ever have constructed his Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. History is bolder and more startling than fiction. Human nature is more wicked than any character constructed by the dramatist or novelist. The human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. This is what is illustrated in the biographies of Ahab and Jezebel and the judges of Jezreel.

No blacker crime than that which they committed is recorded in criminal annals. If we should give way to imagination, and fill up the story which is simply outlined and give it in detail as Shakespeare gives his stories, if we should read between the lines, as it is lawful to read, as it is intended we should read, the story would have in it enormities of such cold blood as would thrill us with horror. But why are we compelled to search such a narrative through and through? It is part of the Scriptures, and its close study is enjoined by the command, "Search the Scriptures!"

Why are we compelled to look upon wickedness of such enormous growth and of such hideous development? The reason is, we need these extravagant exhibitions that we may feel the reality of the sins depicted, and may be stirred up to hate them in every form and degree. As we read the story of Naboth, we exclaim, What avarice! What covetousness! What childishness of behavior! What misery in the midst of luxury! What forgetfulness of untold plenty in the endeavor to grasp a mere bawble! What unmanliness and unroyalty! What daring disregard for God! What presumptuous provocation of his retributive justice! What contempt for human rights, and what audacious trampling of these rights under foot! What deadness of conscience! What insensibility to all of the finer feelings of human nature! What sacrifice of honor and of justice and of life to gratify selfishness! What deliberate and awful murder! These evils are set before us in their extreme forms, and we are made to recoil from them as part of our schooling and discipline. By them we are instructed concerning the evils that are in our life. Our invasion of the rights of others, our discontents and jealousies, the hard thoughts which we think against others, the deceptions of which we are guilty, our forgetfulness of the omniscient eye of God, our possession and enjoyment of ill-gotten gains—what are these? They are evils of the same kind as those which look us in the face when we read the story of Naboth. We are timid Ahabs, and timid Jezebels.

The story of Naboth is told us that we may be aroused to eradicate from our lives every Ahab-like and Jezebel-like thing, lest we become altogether like them.

#### I. THE STORY.

Naboth was a resident of Jezreel. It was here that Ahab had his ivory palace. Naboth owned in this place a vineyard adjoining the grounds of Ahab. We do not know how it lay with regard to Ahab's estate. It may have formed an ugly angle as it jutted into the palatial grounds. Be that as it may, Ahab saw what seemed to him good reasons for desiring its annexation. One reason is stated here, he wanted to turn it into a kitchen garden. Swayed by his desire he said to himself, "I want that vineyard." The desire grew upon him every time he saw it, until it became absolute covetousness. He could not be happy without it. With this feeling he went to Naboth and offered to buy it or make an exchange. But Naboth refused point-blank to part with his vineyard or to enter into any negotiation with Ahab. What? Refuse to sell when rich Ahab, the king, felt that it was essential for him to purchase? This is the question which the shrewd American asks in genuine surprise.

The first thing in the story which lifts Naboth to a high place in our estimation is this: he did not overreach Ahab when he might have done so. He was none of your modern note-shavers or chattel mortgage men. He did not make his money by taking advantage of men's necessities, or by crowd-



ing a business-partner into a corner and customers against the wall. He was the type of a man I like to see in the membership of the church. But why did Naboth refuse to sell? It was not merely because his homestead was full of holy memories. He was bound to the place by sentiment, and sentiment when it is pure and right is among the grandest things in a man's life. It is a mighty power. Nothing is said about sentiment in the narrative, although sentiment would hold him to the old homestead, the cradle of his earliest recollections and the place of his fathers' tombs. It was not dogged obstinacy nor boorish discourtesy: it was principle and loyalty to God's law that led Naboth to refuse to part with his patrimonial acres. Naboth put God back of his refusal to sell. "And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." He was a Jehovah-ite. In all probability he was one of the seven thousand who refused to own and serve Baal. But why did he reply to Ahab, "The Lord forbid"? Because, under the laws which governed real estate in Israel, which had been formulated by the Lord himself, God forbade such a sale or exchange as proposed by Ahab. This was the law: "The land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is mine." The sale of the land was permissible only when necessitated by debt; and then it was not sold for ever; it was sold on condition that the original owner could redeem it at any time; or, if not redeemed, that it should return again to the original family at the



Jubilee. This was a merciful law. It was a law against land monopolists. It was a law which tended to equalize wealth in the nation, and give the weak and unfortunate in business a good, fresh start. Ahab, as a Baal-ite, had no regard for this law of God. Naboth, as a Jehovah-ite, had. He grounded his refusal to sell upon this law. Ahab had raised a question of religion between him and Naboth, and Naboth refused to truckle to power and patronage, but stood firm in his religion. When he died as a consequence of his loyalty to God, he died as a religious martyr. It was the religion in Naboth's refusal that so affected Ahab and moved him so deeply. He felt Naboth's refusal to be a rebuke from God. He writhed under the rebuke. His pride and dignity were wounded. "And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased, and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread."

We write down Ahab very low when we look upon his puerile conduct as he whines and frets. But is not Ahab human? Are not men thrown into this mood to-day? Are there not business men who come home at night ill-natured and sullen, casting a shadow over the household? Are there not housekeepers worrying over little things? Are there not men in the church who mope and sigh and wear a face as gloomy and as foreboding and as far from a smile as though the ten plagues hurled at Egypt had missed Egypt and struck them? Yes. And the only reason for such a face is, they are not able to have everything their own

way. They have run square against some Naboth, with a mind of his own, with personal rights, and with courage to stand up for them. But we must not even do Ahab injustice. There is a favorable way of looking at his royal pout. It is this: he was open and free from hypocrisy in his pouting. Many a man to-day, who is exactly the same internally as Ahab was, puts on a different external and passes for a saint. He misses no meals. He smiles to order. But there is a lie in every smile. There is a positive untruth in the assumption of feeling that is false and foreign. One thing can be said for Ahab, he appeared and acted just as he felt. If men did so to-day, the invisible and active Ahab in us would be made visible.

Ahab was the most miserable man in all the kingdom. His external circumstances were most desirable. He had a throne and palaces and miles of acreage and luxury of every kind. But he was unhappy, and the reason is found in the state of his soul. The soul of man must be made right, if he is ever to be satisfied and happy. Ahab with a kingdom will mourn because he has not Naboth's vineyard. Haman, second to the king, with all Persia at his feet, will be tormented and vexed beyond endurance because Mordecai, a Hebrew porter at the gate, will not bow to him and cringe like a dog. Alexander, with a conquered world prostrate before him, will weep because there are not more worlds to conquer. It is the state of the heart that determines the happiness of man.

Jezebel now comes into the story. The ser-

vants come and tell her of the condition of her royal husband. In deep solicitude and with much apprehension she seeks him. What can be wrong? Can he be smitten with mortal sickness? Has he discovered some plot of treason? Has he received news of an invading enemy, and are the horrors of war about to break out in the land? Dreading some awful discovery, she coaxes from him the cause of his depression. With a sense of relief she exclaimed, "Is that all?" She then twitted him for forgetting that he was king and could do as he pleased, and comforted him in a wifely fashion with the promise that *she* would give him what he wanted. All she asked from Ahab was the royal seal, which carried with it the authority of the throne. This Ahab gave her. This was his sin. This constituted her his agent, and made him responsible for her murderous act. He knew her satanic character. He knew that there was no honest way of securing that vineyard. He was therefore prospectively guilty the moment he refused to restrain Jezebel. The motto of Jezebel was that of the unjust judge, "I fear not God neither regard man." Bribery, murder, theft, perjury, intimidation, these were to her trifles as light as air. She was as cunning and as cold-blooded and as subtle as Herodias. She belonged to a murder-committing family. Secular history tells us that her father murdered his own brother and seized his throne; and sacred history tells us that her daughter Athaliah murdered the whole royal family of Judah, that she might sit upon the

throne, Joash only being saved by Jehoiadah, who was the cause of her final ruin.

The plan of Jezebel was to murder Naboth. She determined to do this judicially. She employed the judges and princes of Jezreel to carry out her purpose. She directed them to proclaim a religious fast, as though some awful calamity was about to overtake the place. The object of this fast was to avert the impending doom, and to search out the sin which occasioned the coming calamity, that it might be removed and the sinner put out of the way. Some think that she directed them to honor Naboth by putting him at the head of the convocation. This would look like goodwill towards Naboth. It would make the perpetrator of the crime conspicuous, and the shock of exposure all the greater. At the opportune moment false witnesses were to come forward and swear that Naboth blasphemed God and the king. The charge was then to be sustained, and Naboth was to be sentenced and executed under the law that punished blasphemy.

The elders and nobles of Jezreel now come into the story. Their blood may have curdled as they read the letters of the queen sealed with the royal stamp; but Jezebel knew her men, and they did as she commanded. They had not the spirit to resist. They stoned Naboth and his sons, and added insult to injury by leaving their bodies unburied, to be devoured by dogs and vultures. They then sent word to Jezebel, "Naboth is stoned and is dead." Jezebel immediately found Ahab and bade



him arise and take, without money or exchange, the vineyard that once belonged to Naboth, for Naboth had died a criminal. The law deeded the property of the criminal to the crown.

Elijah now comes into the story. When Jezebel announced to Ahab that the vineyard of Naboth was his, he at once arose, entered his chariot, and started to Jezreel to enjoy his new-gained possession. He took with him Jehu and Bidkar, two of his courtiers. He uttered no word of condemnation against the awful conspiracy. He determined at once to enjoy the fruits of Jezebel's crime. Thus by deliberately approving her crime he made himself the partner of her guilt. Talking with his courtiers about the use which he intended to make of the ground, he entered the vineyard of Naboth. Just then, unannounced, and in his meteor-like way, Elijah, the prophet of doom, started up before him. With a tongue of fire he spake out, in the hearing of all, the dreadful doom of retribution which God had commissioned him to pronounce: "Hast thou killed and also taken possession? Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." Filled with terror by this awful sentence, Ahab, sick at heart, gasped, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Elijah replied, "I have found thee because thou hast sold thyself to work evil." Then pronouncing a like doom against Jezebel, he left the terror-stricken king to his fears. The sentence came like a thunder-clap, but Ahab knew that the man who uttered it was



cognizant of his crime, and that he was not the man to beat the air and utter vain words. He felt the justice of the sentence and at once began to reap the consequences of his sin.

What advantage did Ahab acquire from his stolen vineyard? That is the question. What good accrues to any man from ill-gotten gains? Ill-gotten gains turn into gall, they become a thorn in the side, they result in torment of conscience, and they stand forth condemning witnesses in the day of judgment. What were the thirty pieces of silver to Judas Iscariot? What red-hot, molten drops of metal are on bare nerves, those pieces of silver were to the awakened conscience of Judas. No man need expect to get more from his ill-gotten silver than Judas got from his thirty pieces.

The sentence of Ahab—was it executed? His whole family was extirpated root and branch, and he fell in a way which called attention to the fact that God wrought his death. While he led Israel in a battle against Syria a certain man drew his bow at a venture, and without aiming at anybody or anything, let the arrow fly. A human arm put strength into the bow, but it was the eye of God that sighted the arrow. It struck Ahab between the joints of his armor and made a mortal wound. The charioteer drove the wounded Ahab to Jezreel, where he was buried. The chariot, dripping with his blood, was taken to the town pool to be washed, and the street dogs were seen licking up the dead man's blood.

Jezebel's death was as tragic as that of Ahab. Jehu, the courtier of her husband, made war against the dynasty of her house and cut it down with great slaughter. As he passed victoriously by the castle of Jezebel, she cried out of the window at him and hurled a keen taunt. This roused the anger of Jehu, and looking up he shouted, "Are any of you in the castle on my side?" Two or three eunuchs replied, "We are;" for Jezebel was hated even in the palace. Then Jehu cried, "Throw her out of the window!" This they at once did, and she lay mangled and broken on the ground at Jehu's feet. In another instant the wheels of his chariot crashed over her as he rode on. In a little while after, when his anger cooled, Jehu commanded, "Let them go out and bury the cursed woman, for after all she is a king's daughter." "And they went to bury her; but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands." The street dogs had eaten her. Horror! But thus it was predicted. This was her sentence from the Lord. This was retributive justice. Jehu, who was with Ahab when Elijah met him in Naboth's vineyard and pronounced his doom, recognized it as such. And he said, "This is the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah."

## II. THE LESSONS.

1. *It is a common mistake to look upon our conscientious reprovers as enemies.*

"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Thus

Ahab hissed at Elijah, when Elijah reproved him for sin. The prophets were all reprovers of vices and sins, and for this reason they were hated. Jeremiah was put into a miry pit, and Isaiah was sawn asunder. Christ was hated because he rebuked men by his holy life and uttered scathing words against the sins of his day. We are not better than our fathers in our disposition towards those who rebuke us and expose our sins. We do not like a preacher who is personal in his preaching. He may lay the lash upon Adam and upon the rest of the Bible sinners, but when he lays the lash upon our guilty backs, we rise in arms against him. Let us correct our estimates. An honest, God-fearing reprovcr is an Elijah. He stands to us in the stead of God.

2. *We are responsible for our name and influence.*

Jezebel planned the murder of Naboth, but God held Ahab equally responsible, because he allowed his name and seal to be set upon the plans. This gave them authority. Pilate thought to wash his hands free from the stains of the blood of Jesus. This he could not do, because his name and influence carried Christ to the cross. "Christ crucified by Pontius Pilate," is the current phrase of the age. Let us look at our responsibility as God looks at it.

3. *The discipline of our desires is a duty.*

This is where Ahab failed. This is where half of the world fails. Desires are the springs of life; if we keep the springs under control, we keep life under control. Ahab earnestly desired the vine-

yard of Naboth and Naboth refused to give it to him. There was no lawful way to get it. What would we have Ahab do? Do without it. We should learn from Ahab's mistake. We should learn to take refusals in life. We should attain the power of doing without what we cannot legitimately secure. We should deny ourselves.

4. *There is such a thing as righteous retribution.*

The heathen believe this. The fable of "The Furies" following the criminal is the outgrowth of such a belief. Adoni-bezek attributed the loss of his thumbs and great toes to retributive justice. (Judges 1:7). To the child of God the fact is an absolute certainty. He sees it upon every page of history. God stands back of his law and vindicates it and keeps men from trifling with it. Cain and Ahab and Jezebel are all striking embodiments of the operation of retributive justice. So is the doom which overtook the city which crucified Jesus of Nazareth. We hear its citizens cry, "His blood be upon us and upon our children;" and it is upon them and theirs to this very day. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."



ELIJAH TRANSLATED: A REVELATION  
OF THE BELIEVER'S FUTURE.

"BEHOLD, THERE APPEARED A CHARIOT OF FIRE AND HORSES OF FIRE, AND ELIJAH WENT UP BY A WHIRLWIND INTO HEAVEN."  
*2 Kings 2:11.*

THE story of the ascension of Elijah makes an impression upon the soul which lives and burns and thrills. And yet when you come to analyze the narrative, and look narrowly into its words and phrases, you are surprised how much silence it maintains and how little it tells.

Still the story holds an infinitely large place in my aspirations and conceptions. Each friend that goes enlarges it. But notice the story as it is in the Word of God. It does not cover a single page. No. It does not cover a single chapter. No. It is told in a single verse—one verse and no more. There are a thousand questions which you would like to have answered, but they are not answered. There is wisdom in all this; there is wisdom in refraining from a detailed description of a great event. When the details are left to the play of a regenerated imagination they become full of solemnity and sublimity, but the moment you try to put them into words and give them visibility, you limit their majesty and their power. Better not work up the translation of Elijah; better allow each imagination, as it comes to it, to work it up for itself from the richness and ful-



ness of its own life. Better to follow the spirit of inspiration and treat it as inexpressible. The *inexpressible* is the same thing as the *immeasurable*.

But there are details of some kind connected with the story, are there not? There are. There are the details of what precedes and what succeeds. We are told of the journeys to Gilgal and Bethel and Jericho. We are told that it was known in the schools of the prophets that Elijah was going. We are told how the two prophets journeyed and talked. The orphan-cry which leaped from the heart of Elisha when he found himself alone is given. The history of the fallen mantle is recorded. And we are told that the sons of the prophets accepted Elisha as the successor of Elijah when they saw the power of God working through him as it had worked through his master. All these details are given us; and then right in the midst of these details occurs the one verse which narrates the ascension of the Prophet of Fire. The ascension of Elijah is put right in the midst of verities and facts that it might be looked upon as a verity and a fact—as much of a fact as the going to Jericho, as the orphan-cry, as the falling of the mantle, as the climbing of the terraces by the fifty sons of the prophets that they might witness what was about to take place. It is no more possible to explain it away than it is to explain away the straightforward facts in the midst of which its story is imbedded.

## I. THE ASCENSION.

This is the story as it enlarges itself before my mind. It was while the two prophets talked and held sweet communion that the triumphant exit took place. A brightness like the ruby splendor of the evening sky suddenly filled the dome of heaven and the roar of a mighty storm rolled through the atmosphere. A whirlwind came, cleaving the fields of space, and stopped not until it struck the spot where Elisha was. Speedily it enfolded him. As Elisha saw it there was in the centre of the whirlwind a chariot and horses of fire. Into the chariot Elijah was lifted and the glowing sight went up and still up, past Orion, past the Pleiades, up to the gates of pearl, and then along the streets of gold to the palace of God:

“The drivers were angels on horses of whiteness,  
And the burning wheels turned upon axles of brightness;  
A seraph unfolded its doors bright and shining,  
All dazzling like gold of the seventh refining;  
On the arch of the rainbow the chariot is gliding,  
Through the paths of the thunder the horses are riding.”

As flesh and blood cannot enter heaven, and as Elijah appears on the Mountain of Transfiguration with a body full of glory, the body of Elijah in the ascension was no doubt spiritualized and fitted for its new state of being. Just as the radiance of light smites the falling raindrops and in an instant turns them into the many-hued bow, so the resurrection power of God laid hold of the body of Elijah and in an atom of time transfigured

and glorified it. Corruption put on incorruption, the mortal put on immortality, dishonor gave way to glory, and the natural or fleshly body became a spiritual body.

The change which took place in Elijah illustrates the words of Paul. It may be also that it suggested his words, "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump."

## II. THE PURPORT OF THE TRANSLATION.

It is meant to teach us that there is a future life and that it is determined by the present life. For men who are grand and good here, there is a grand and good immortality in that place to which Elijah ascended. There is an Elijah-life and an Elijah-immortality. There is an Ahab-life and an Ahab-immortality. All men are immortal, but the immortality of all men is not alike. It is awfully different. There may be a cloud in the sky, but there is a great difference between that cloud filled with inky blackness and that cloud transfused and transfigured by the glorious light of the sun. The future existence of the wicked is a cloud filled with inky blackness. The future existence of the righteous is a cloud filled with light. In the immortality of the righteous there will be no sin, no unbalanced passion, no crippled faculty, no mental or moral or spiritual infirmity. His life will be like the life of God, full of joy, peace, purity, knowledge, and satisfaction.

We need to have ourselves and our possibilities made known to us, and to answer this need is the design of the narrative. Man is like a seed. We cannot see all that is in a seed; we must be instructed as to what is in it. Some one must take the acorn, for example, and plant it and nurture it and evolve from it the oak and then the forest, before we can know how much there is in the acorn. Even so before we can know how much is in man God must take a man, as he takes Elijah, and evolve from him his grand and heroic life and translate him to heaven, and in this way unfold his immortality. God means Elijah to be a revelation of man to man. As by his life he teaches us what principle to plant in our hearts, by his translation he teaches us that life on earth is not all of a man's life; there is a continuance of personal existence and identity beyond.

We might reason this out in a dim way. The imagination as a seer proclaims it. Conscience as a prophet predicts it. Our thoughts and feelings spire heavenward and are like fingers pointing to a world out of sight. There is something within us which corresponds to and answers to something above, just as there is something in this earth of ours which links it to the flashing worlds which crowd the ethereal plain and makes it one with them in rhythmic tread. While all this is true, and while we can reason thus, God knew that it would not satisfy man; that man craves certainties; that he wants something more than the conclusions of an unenlightened guessing rea-



son, something more than the analogies of nature and the inductions of philosophy. God knew that man wanted facts and visible proofs. So he gave him what he demanded by giving him the translation of Elijah. Here was immortality asserting itself and carrying man to the immortal world. Here was a man passing over the pathway between earth and heaven, and by that act proving beyond contradiction that there is such a pathway connecting the two worlds. Elijah, soaring up to heaven in majestic flight, gave definiteness and tangibleness to the doctrines of eternity and immortality and heaven. The story of his translation closes his life in a way that makes it a thrilling power and gives symmetry to his striking and brilliant career. It closes it with an appropriateness and a beauty like that seen in the biography of Jesus. It would not do to close the biography of Jesus with the sealed tomb. The closing picture in his biography must be the living and ascended Christ, reigning amid the majesty of heaven. This makes Jesus Christ a present reality and a present power. It would not do to close the biography of Elijah with the flight to Cherith, or with the collapse under the juniper-tree, or even with the heroism of Carmel. He must be seen riding to heaven in the chariot of fire, the equipage of royalty. This gives completeness and uniqueness to his history as the Prophet of Fire and shows the reward of a true life.

How his translation must have stirred Elisha and the schools of the prophets, and called out a

fresh discussion and a new and broader restatement of the doctrine of the future life of man! When once it was rediscussed in the schools, the doctrine would find fresh advocacy in the community; for the sons of the prophets, all on fire with it, would blaze it abroad and emphasize it by the wondrous story of Elijah's ride to glory. We reason that this departure of Elijah would act as the departure of our friends acts. We may live indifferent to the other life and to the future destiny of the human race so long as our loved ones are with us here; but when our esteemed and intimate and godly associates leave us and there is an aching void in our lives, questions like these seize us and clamor for an answer. Do they still live? Where are they? What are they doing? We turn over the leaves of the Bible which they were accustomed to read and we peruse the thumb-worn, tear-marked pages which contain the fourteenth chapter of John and the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of Revelation. We remember how these chapters lived in them and filled their souls with peace and joy and glowing hope, and the question crowds into our minds, Are they for ever through with these glorious chapters? Are there no mansions? Is there no Father's house, no crystal river, no tree of life, no city of gold for them now? And does not our soul instinctively answer, These were never so much of a reality to them as they are now? Some one has told us of a man who lived upon the banks of a broad river, who was so much absorbed

with the work of his farm that he never once thought of inquiring as to what was on the other side. Thus it was for years and years. But in the course of time his eldest son crossed the river, married there, and made the land his home. A daughter followed and did likewise. Then an interest was at once awakened in the father's heart as to what was on the other side of the river. The story may be used as a parable. The flowing river is the Jordan which separates this world from the heavenly Canaan. The man of the story is the type of a class who are indifferent agnostics with regard to the future of man and the doctrine of the heavenly life. The crossing of the son and daughter is the departure of loved ones who leave us in death. The inquiries of the father, and his desire to be with his children, set forth the anxious search to which we are stirred by the death of our friends, that we may assure ourselves that there is a heaven with its endless perfection and with its eternal life and soul-satisfying joys. The translation of Elijah was a mighty power in those days, setting forth the contiguity of heaven to earth, illustrating the reward of the good, and asserting the immortality of man. It was a teaching, a confirming fact. It set forth the grand certainties of the future in visible, comprehensible form. This was its mission.

Elijah is introduced by the story as acquainted with the fact that God was about to take him up to heaven, and that in a short time. From his answer to Elisha's request it would appear also

that he had some idea as to the method of his departure. While this is true, we believe that he had no adequate idea of the degree of glory which awaited him. While much was revealed, there was much that was veiled. We are only able to comprehend a certain measure of heaven's glory. Besides this too much insight into heaven would demoralize our earthly life. We should be so enraptured of heaven that we would forget and neglect the things of earth. We find this incident in the annals of navigation which serves us as an illustration. The crew of a gallant ship forgot their duty on board by reason of a vision of their native hills. Many long years had passed over them since they had left the fatherland. As soon as one of their number caught sight of home scenes from his outlook on the topmast, he raised a shout, "Yonder it is! Yonder it is!" That shout shot like electricity through every heart on board. All sought to catch the same glance. Some climbed the masts and some took the telescopes. Every eye was on it. All thoughts of the vessel were lost in the strong and strange excitement. The vessel might have sprung aleak or run ashore or sunk to the bottom for aught they thought about her. Present duties were utterly neglected. Somewhat thus would it be with us were the particulars of the heavenly world made clear and palpable to our hearts. The veil of secrecy drawn over them is woven by the hand of mercy.

Enough of the coming glory was revealed to Elijah to quicken him and make hope beat high,



but not enough to paralyze his energies. He continues his earthly work up to the last moment. He visits the schools of the prophets at Gilgal and Bethel and Jericho under the impulse which he got from the knowledge of his coming translation. He had reviewed and probably reorganized these centres of religious knowledge and enterprise, and now that he must leave them, he is anxious to correct anything amiss in them and to put new life and fidelity into them by his parting words. The men of these schools, as well as Elisha, knew of the near separation, and the words of Elijah had to them all the power of farewell words. Elijah, busy to the very last, teaches us that there are no spare hours in an earnest man's life. He entertains no dream of idleness; he looks forward to no season when his work shall be considered done and he can rest and wait for the coming translation. With him life is crowded to the very last moment. The earnest man is a man like John Wesley, who said that if he knew he were going to die to-morrow morning at early dawn, he would meet the remaining appointments of the day just as he had made them, and work as he intended to work up until near midnight, and then go to bed in the usual way and fall asleep on earth and waken in glory. Elijah teaches us that so long as God gives us ability to work he means us to work.

### III. DEDUCTIONS.

#### 1. *There is a coronation for true character.*

Its own graces are a grand crown. We admire

Elijah himself. His whole career was a stepping heavenward. Public approbation is a crown. If the present generation will not honor a true character, after generations will attend to its coronation. But apart from these things, there is a reward which God directly gives in the exercise of his righteous justice. Paul speaks of it as "a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give at that day." Elijah's translation was Elijah's coronation. The believer's acquittal and reception into heaven will be the believer's coronation.

2. *Life and its close usually correspond.*

There was a harmony between Elijah's life and Elijah's departure. His was a tempest-tossed life, and it ended in a whirlwind of glory. He was a man of fire, and he went up to heaven in a chariot of fire. Bunyan sets forth this point in portraying the life and death of his characters. "Faithful," whose life was a triumph, found that death was not so much death as a translation. "Fearing" went shuddering into the valley of shadows. "Hopeful" felt a firm footing and a good bottom in the river. In the Bible heroes we find the same correspondence. Moses lived in solitude. In spiritual life and service he towered out of sight of his age. There was none who could fully sympathize with him, not even his wife, not even Aaron. Now this man of solitude died in solitude. Christ lived a life of self-sacrifice, and fittingly died on the cross. By our daily living we are shaping the close of our life.

3. *The Bible gives a large place to the after life.*

The Book sets before us heavenly principles, characteristics, habitudes, but it does more. Besides portraying the heaven-life which we should live on earth, it sets forth that into which it leads. It sets forth heaven itself and the eternal existence of man. It gives scene after scene which makes us realize that there is another and better world above, and that it is related to this world, and that its inhabitants are interested in this world. It flashes the light of this heaven-world over earth's plains by the story of the shepherds of Bethlehem. It gives us some of its songs. It fills some chapters with discourses upon the change which will take place in us as a preparation for that world, and it fills other chapters with descriptions of the world itself. And for what purpose? Paul gives the purpose in the closing words of his long and magnificent treatise on the resurrection. It is this: Be stirred up to make the most of this present life, for this present life is carried into and makes the after life. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

## THE GODLY SUCCESSION; OR ELIJAH, THEN ELISHA.

"AND HE TOOK UP THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH THAT FELL FROM HIM." "AND WHEN THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS SAW HIM THEY SAID, THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH DOTHT REST UPON ELISHA."—2 *Kings* 2:14, 15.

WE are taking our last earthly walk with many of God's people. They have been with the church for years and are its pillars. They have planned and prayed and contributed and sacrificed and counselled and worked. The church is the embodiment of their thought and their substance and their very life. But they are on their way to eternity, and have almost reached the border-line. The seamed face, the tottering step, the silver locks, the weak vital organ laboriously struggling to perform its functions, are the "sons of the prophets" saying unto us, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?"

And concerning many of our friends in Christ the earthly walk has already ended. Their revered faces and forms are no more. All that we have is the mantle which fell from their ascension chariot and fluttered to the ground.

As we stand by the fallen mantle our souls are stirred with earnest thoughts and deep problems and burning questions, and these must be seriously and thoroughly dealt with. They centre around the church which the ascended ones have left.



How can Israel exist without Elijah? Will not his going prove the end? Who will rebuke and love and sacrifice and lead? Elijah's holy character was mightier than a standing army, and his divine principles were a more certain defence than the most approved batteries, and his prayers were forces absolutely irresistible. His bodily presence in Israel meant national righteousness, respect for individual rights, growth of magnificent institutions, waving harvests, universal plenty, and the inspiring presence of Almighty God. Thus it is: the good and the great and the devoted in the ranks of the church are the human instrumentalities which work out the glorious destinies of the church. When they fall, the church, from a human point of view, strikes a crisis. The problem is, How can the crisis be tided over?

It is well with those who have ascended. But what of the church which they have left? What of the church of God out of whose life so many grand personalities have gone and are going? That is the present, the perplexing, and the all-absorbing question. The same Scripture which tells us that it is well with those who have gone tells us that it is well with the church which remains. It comes to us and proclaims this doctrine: There shall always be a succession of the godly. O trembling and mourning church of God, this is the great fact wherewith thy King and Head would comfort thee and strengthen thee and fill thee with courage for the future. Write the fact before thine eyes in letters of faith and confidence as large and as

bright as the burning constellations of space which thy God uses as an alphabet in writing upon the manuscript of the skies.

There is a succession of the good! There is no fact more largely proclaimed in God's universe. God has thousands of bells arranged into numberless chimes, and every chime is ringing out the fact. The chimes of God are ringing all through nature to teach the doctrine of succession. The night proclaims it, and so does the day.

Let me illustrate. Last night you stood under the broad expanse and saw the sky jewelled with worlds. The sight was grand. The silence and the shade and the silver beams and the vast depths of the heavenly dome talked to your soul and thrilled you through and through with the sense of infinity and immensity and grandeur and beauty. You felt to the inmost recesses of your soul the awful presence of the great and majestic God. After the night came the day. It opened into magnificence and splendor out of the night, just as the beautiful spring flower opens, a glad surprise, out of the dark heart of the bud. As you enjoyed the night, as you enjoyed the day, was there the faintest stirring of a fear within you lest there should never be another night or day? No. Why? Because God has imbedded in to-day the prophecy of to-morrow.

The entire vegetable world is a proclamation of the doctrine. I found the doctrine yesterday out yonder in the Boston Public Garden. It has put on again its far-famed robes of beauty, on

the right hand and on the left and along the out-branching walks. As I walked these paths I was reminded of a walk in the same place last year with a brother who a few days ago left earth to go to God. When I recalled our conversation, and thought of him above the stars and of myself still walking the earth, this was the question that was uppermost in my mind: When we all have passed from the season of time into the season of eternity shall there be a succession of ourselves there and of our friends there? i. e., shall there be the same loves, the same fellowships? I was in the best possible place to ask that question, for right before my eyes was the fac-simile of the olden glory of a former spring. Around me were the flowers of this year, God's chimes, ringing out the glad fact, There shall always be a succession of the true and the beautiful and the good and the helpful and the delightful and the desirable and the appreciated. Mrs. Whitney expresses our thought touchingly:

“ God does not send strange flowers every year.  
When the spring winds blow o'er the pleasant places,  
The same dear things lift up the same fair faces :  
The violet is here.

“ It all comes back, the odor, grace, and hue,  
Each sweet relation of its life repeated.  
No blank is left, no looking-for is cheated :  
It is the thing we knew.

“ So after the *death-winter* it must be ;  
God will not put strange signs in the heavenly places,  
The old love shall look out from the old faces :  
*Veilchen*, I shall have thee.”

The spring of last year has been succeeded by the spring of this year, and the successor is not one whit less grand than the predecessor. With the voices of spring ringing in my ears, I say to your soul as I say to my own soul, "As 'it is with the flowers, so it is with men." When Elijah rides through the skies in a grand way, fitting his grand life, there is no need to despair for Israel. No, Elijah is only a prophetic bell of God ringing out the message to Israel, "There shall be an Elisha."

As I have spoken of nature, so I might speak of history. History turns men and women into the chimes of God to toll the same fact. Elijah must drop the mantle before Elisha can take it up. Aaron must disrobe on the mountain-top before Eleazar can robe. It is Elijah, then Elisha; Aaron then Eleazar; Bacon, then Newton; it is the Puritan, then the Pilgrim. The sum and substance of the coming and going of men and women is this: There shall always be an army of God, and there shall always be a Tenth Legion in that army. From Adam to Christ there was a succession, a line of covenant men, and from Christ to our day there has been a succession, a line of gospel-workers. In the Old Testament Moses was followed by Joshua, and strange to say, Joshua, the successor, was born during the darkest hour of Moses' career, the hour when his first attempt to befriend the Hebrews proved an utter failure. The cause of freedom was hopeless to Moses, but not to God, for that very moment God brought Joshua upon the stage of being and began working for a period



eighty years in the future. In the New Testament Stephen was followed by Paul, and strange to say, Paul, the persecutor of Stephen, took up that particular department of work which was dear to Stephen, and which he outlined in the address which made him a martyr.

Such is history as it pertains to the church of God, and it demonstrates to the certainty of an axiom that He who walks among the golden candlesticks holds the stars of the church in His omnipotent and provident right hand. If we broaden our research in the field of history, we shall find the same doctrine in all the departments of life. The work of reform did not stop when Huss and Zwingli and Luther died; other men took up the work at the point where they left it. Reform in England was not quenched when Latimer and Ridley were burned. Rather was it true, as they said on that day, there was a fire kindled in England that should never be put out. The progress of scientific discovery did not cease when Newton's brain grew tired and lay down to rest; a thousand men have stood on Newton's highest heights, and have reached out farther than he was able to reach.

But I am asked at this point, Why are you so confident of the succession of the godly? Why do you expect church-work and reform-work to go on, while on every side reformers are dying and the church is losing its most efficient workers? I reply, I am confident because the God of reform and the God of the church lives. He buries the workman, but not the work. He allows the priest to

die, but not the priesthood. He allows the king to fall, but not the throne. He allows the prophet to pass away, but not so the office of the prophet. God abides. That is what this Scripture says; and it says it that we may believe that his cause will abide.

We are too apt to say, The former times were better than these, and to imagine that former greatness cannot be grown now. We act as though the grandeur of thought and the saintliness and the courage of yore would nevermore dignify the human race, as though the special grace vouchsafed to the patriarchs and the prophets and the apostles had evaporated. Churchmen look back to the fathers, Dissenters to the Reformers. Now the martyrs of ancient days, now the stalwart heroes of the Puritans, are gilded by reverent memory; and then this pensive thought throws a chilling darkness over all our inner life and clouds our faith and hope, "The day of grace will never return." But what is the truth in the matter? This: God comes to us as he came to Joshua when he took up the great work of Moses, and he says to us as he said to him, "Fear not: fear not; for as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee." With God's words before me, I say to the men and women of this historic church of God, "Revere the saintly past, but do not forget to recognize the divine present. While great ones have gone, He who made them great remains, and he will make you great in proportion to your surrender to him and your willingness to serve him."

If what I say be true, then it is essential to our faith and our hope and our enterprise and our self-surrender and our future that we know who this abiding God is. How can we know? We can know him through the names given him in the Holy Book. Take this Scripture which gives us our text. God is here called "the God of Elijah." When Elisha returned from the spot where Elijah ascended and stood upon the bank of the Jordan, he smote the waters with the mantle and cried, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" and the waters parted and he crossed dry-shod. "The Lord God of Elijah." That means the ability to make a man equal to the bequeathed work of Elijah. That means the reproduction of Carmel if the good of Israel require. That means the power to divide the Jordan, to cleave a way through every difficulty. Other names are given to God. He is called "the Most High," for he out-soars every human and finite altitude. He is spoken of as "the God who inhabiteth eternity," for the ages have no effect upon him. Men pass away, but he does not. He outlines his work through the centuries, and carries it on from generation to generation. He is called "the omnipotent One," for the peculiarities of the nineteenth century do not enfeeble him. He is "the God of hosts," for all ranks of existence and entities are open to him and obey his call. When he orders it, a Saul becomes a Paul and leaves the captaincy of the hosts of evil and takes the captaincy of the hosts of the good.

I have spoken of the certainty of the succession of the good because of the play of the divine. But the play of the divine is not all. There is the play of the human. God has his part and Elijah has his part and Elisha has his part. Let us give our thoughts to the play of the human.

I begin with Elijah. Elijah not only did his personal work, but he worked towards a successor. Do not forget Abel-meholah. He made a special journey to Abel-meholah, that he might find young Elisha and cast his mantle over him. He kept the young man constantly with him, let him into his work, consulted him, disciplined him, lived before him an intense God-filled life, impressed himself upon him, breathed his soul into him, and brought him to his way of thinking. When he had done this, he was willing to be superseded. In addition to this, he nurtured the schools of the prophets, and prepared the young men in these schools for following their coming leader. His last hours on earth were spent in communion with the young men. They had a recognition in his life. He made them feel that the future was in their hands, and that he was satisfied to leave it there. He felt that the future was as safe in their hands as though he were always to be in the midst of Israel to guide affairs. Hence his great calmness in going. It took discipline of self upon his part to lift him up to this calmness and satisfaction; but the calmness and satisfaction were worth all the cost of discipline.

In his satisfaction in leaving Israel in other



hands, Elijah reminds me of the workmen who began the building of the Cathedral of Cologne. It was back in the thirteenth century when they began to build. They knew they could not finish it. It took six hundred years to do that. It was necessary that the men of the thirteenth century should join hands with the men of the nineteenth century. Yet the men of the thirteenth century were perfectly satisfied to quit work when their day of labor reached its evening. They knew that the work would go on, and that the architect's ideal would stand before the world, a Psalm of Praise in stone—crystallized music. They knew that by doing well their work they would interest others in the grand architectural purpose and inspire them to lend a helping hand and continue the labor.

Like Elijah, we should be making our successors. But how can we make our successors? By living an earnest all-on-fire life for God. By standing by the truth. By linking our efforts and purposes to everlasting principles. By building up characters worthy of a reproduction. By espousing immortal causes. By impressing ourselves upon the coming men. By recognizing the merits of the younger men and admitting them to companionship and counsel and work and responsibility. It is a slur upon the fathers to say there are no men who can succeed them, and who, in the spirit of the fathers, can meet and can carry to triumph the issues of the day.

A word in closing about Elisha.

Only for a little while did he give way to the paralyzing convulsions of grief. He entered as soon as possible on the only pathway of comfort, which is the pathway of work. He buried his grief in his endeavor to be a *replica* of his master. He felt that if his master was taken away for a purpose, he was spared for a purpose. We may not sit and mourn over our beloved dead; we are to arise and take up their work. To carry it on is a sweet consolation, and to enlarge it, and to make it a hundred-fold wider and deeper and vaster, is a sweeter consolation still. We feel ourselves linked with the departed as we trace their blessed footsteps and deepen the furrows they have already made. It brings us into closer fellowship with them. Bereaved as he was, and robbed of a great and loving fellowship, the after-life of Elisha was one of much joy and peace. The work which he took up unfolded his powers and made him to Israel what his master had been. It was not a strange coincidence, but a natural outcome and a legitimate product of the course which he followed, that when he died, Joash the king of Israel cried over his departure as he had cried over the departure of Elijah, uttering the very same lament, "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"

I am in search to-day for Elishas. I am seeking for men who are willing to stand with the church of God in its struggles and enter with it into its rewards. I am after men who will be honest and true; men out and out for Christ; lovers

of the truth, fearless in the presence of opposition, free from the spirit of time-serving; bold men, lovable men, affable men, but men who will not yield a single inch when principle is at stake; men who are swift of foot, liberal of hand, loyal of heart; men who are able to count it an honor to stand alone, with God, when their generation turns its back upon God; men who will be a walking conscience in the community; men who will give the church of God a large place in their lives. Only men of this type are worthy to be the successors of the fathers. I am pleading for the succession of the godly, and I am urging you to do your part to secure it. Who will fill the vacant places and wear the fallen mantles? Will you?

Do I hear you say, I am not the man to take up the work of the worker ascended, I am so unlike him in all my circumstances? I respond, There was no man in all Israel more unlike Elijah than Elisha. But he had the spirit of his master. Have you the spirit of those who have ascended? Then you have all the equipment requisite. Do I hear you say, I cannot equal the departed worker; his deeds were beyond anything I can do? I respond, That is honest talking. But you are thinking of his maturer services. Think of what he was when he began. Think of his growth and expect a like growth. Why should Christian men need to be urged and argued with in order that they may be induced to take up the work of God which other human hands have laid down? Their lives

have been spared that they may do this very thing, and upon the doing of this very thing depends their fellowship with the good and the great. I might say that upon the doing of this very thing depends the existence of spiritual life in their own souls. My Christian brethren, God wants you all to step at once into active service. He wants every fallen mantle in the church to be speedily taken up and put to use. Therefore away with all timidity and hesitancy and evasion. Therefore welcome trust in God, holy boldness, lofty ambition, wide purposes, large ideals, the full incoming of the spirit of the departed good, and such a fervent and earnest desire to reproduce them as will lead to a complete and irrevocable surrender to the service of Christ and of his church.



## THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON.

"AND THE CHILD OPENED HIS EYES."—2 *Kings* 4:35.

## I. THE NARRATIVE.

THE narrative is beautifully told. Its chief characteristics are simplicity, naturalness, and pathos. It sets before us a household drama. It emphasizes many traits which make a home happy and pure. In many respects the home of Shunem was an ideal home. Although the story is short, it introduces us to many characters. Each of these is a study, and indicates something to be emulated or something to be shunned.

The chief actor in this story is the woman of Shunem. It is her graces that are set forth. Her hospitality, her grief, her faith, her activity and execution are the marked things in the story. The wonderful resurrection of her child comes as the reward of her faith and life. If she had not been what she was, this page would not have had a place in the Bible. Like many other characters in the Book, her name is not given: she is known only as "the Shunammite." So it is with the widow of the two mites, the old prophet, the woman of Syro-phœnicia. These all are nameless, because through them human nature is pictured. Their virtues may be reached by any one.

The story of the lesson is as follows: Elisha, on his way to Mt. Carmel from Samaria where he lived, passed through Shunem. This journey he

made frequently. In Shunem there lived a certain woman, the wife of one of the rich men of the town. Being kindly disposed, she entertained the prophet at her home. She was given to hospitality. In her, goodness adorned gold. As Elisha stopped very often in Shunem, she proposed to her husband that they furnish a room for him in their home so that he might feel that he was a member of their family and always have a welcome. This they did. They prepared a prophet's chamber. Such generosity could not go unrewarded. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward." This woman's mansion was a childless mansion. So God blessed her by sending a child into her home. Her reward was a child from God, a child to break the monotony of the household, a child to love her, to renew her childhood, to perpetuate her name. In the gift of a child God gave the woman of Shunem a magnificent reward. Truly godliness is profitable.

The touching and thrilling part of the narrative comes after the glad reception of this child of reward into the Shunammite home. The baby grew into a boy. It attained backbone enough to stand its father's rough tossing, and then father as well as mother made it a companion.

A strain of sorrow comes into the story just here. One day the little boy went out with his father to the harvest field. It was a burning hot day and the child was struck by the sun and overpowered by the heat. It was a fatal sunstroke.

For when the child was carried to his mother's knee, the infant's hospital, he died in her arms. That was a cruel blow. In that dead child much of her life lay dead. The suddenness and unexpectedness of the stroke made it all the more stunning. The death-angel flew so swiftly that no shadow gave warning of his approach. No one can tell what may happen to his home between morning and noon. In the morning the child was full of glee and life; at noon it was a corpse.

The great calamity centres the heart of the Shunammite in God and in his prophet. Her grief is a paroxysm, an agony; but her faith in God comes to her help. It says, "It is not like God to wrench my heart by tearing for ever from it that around which it has entwined all its affections; surely he can give him back to me as he gave back to the widow of Zarephath her son when Elijah prayed him to do so. I will go and ask Elisha to pray for me, that my son may be given back. Why was the dull content of my childless state changed to a mother's joy if that joy was to be thus brief? Why was not the night left unbroken by the flash? I believe God does not intend this bereavement to be permanent. His gift would not be a complete gift if thus taken away." Under the impulse of a faith which spoke thus, she kept the death of the boy concealed from her husband, and hastened to the prophet Elisha to have her faith in God realized and crowned. If she had told her husband, he would have looked upon

her faith as madness, and have said that she was insane from grief and needed to be restrained. He would have made the funeral preparations. But she would have no funeral preparations, for her faith would not admit of a funeral.

The prophet Elisha, as he looked down from the heights of Carmel, saw her coming, and he divined that all was not well. So he sent Gehazi, his servant, to greet her. But such was her eagerness to see the final issue of her faith that she pushed past the servant with a single word and came into the presence of the master. Throwing herself at the feet of Elisha and clasping them, she expressed the intensity of her grief by this mute action. When the first flood of grief was over, her vexed soul addressed two brief questions to Elisha, "Did I desire a son of my lord? Did not I say, Do not deceive me?" And then Elisha knew the whole trouble, that her boy was dead. And then he knew too the demand of her faith, that she wanted him back again, and that she would consider the gift incomplete until he was restored.

Just here the greatness of the prophet comes in. The faith of this woman touched his and awakened it into life. His faith caught the fire and zeal of her faith. He at once determined the restoration of the child. As Elijah's successor he determined to do Elijah-like deeds. The power of God shall be shown at Shunem as it was shown at Zarephath.

He at first determined the restoration of the



child by means of his official staff. He told Gehazi, his servant, to carry his staff and lay it upon the child. But this did not satisfy the craving of the mother's heart. Nothing but the prophet's presence in the chamber of death will answer the demands of her nature.

There is a lesson here for all who would do good. There must be the personal presence of the worker in doing good. "There is no doing of God's work at arm's length." If Elisha thought that his staff would do his work he was greatly mistaken. But there are a great many men who make the same mistake. A wealthy Christian is asked to take a class in the Sabbath-school. He answers, "I cannot do that, but I will send a contribution into your school treasury. Money is my support. Lay my staff upon the face of the children." A Sabbath-school teacher who is not ready to find time to visit a sick scholar sends a note or a bouquet or a book, which may be very well in its place, but it is the teacher's staff and not the teacher. A minister who sends one of his best sermons or a tract he has written to an inquiring soul instead of going himself to talk and pray with the anxious one, certainly does no better than Elisha when he sent his staff. A staff is a very good thing, but a man of God is better.

When Elisha went to the prophet's chamber he found the dead child upon his bed where the mother's faith had laid him. As his staff had not awakened the dead boy, he gave himself to the task of calling the power of God into exercise by

means of believing prayer. Only the power of God can raise the dead. He closed the door of his room and gave himself up to prayer. "There were present only the dead child and the living Lord. He prayed against death to One who was greater than death." It is true that he stretched himself upon the child as though his warm life could transfuse itself into the dead child, but this action was only the expression of his faith that the child would be again filled with warm life. It was his way of acting out his earnestness. It was believing prayer offered to God by actions. He prayed in deeds as well as in words.

And was the prayer of the prophet answered? It was. The gates of the spirit-world opened earthward and the soul of the child came back and reanimated the cold clay. The child arose from the bed of death in perfect life and health. The pain in the head had gone, and he was delivered by Elisha to his mother thoroughly well. There was a depth of gladness now in the heart which an hour before had known only the depth of sorrow. "And the child opened his eyes. And Elisha called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she went in and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son and went out." Thus the narrative closes in a simple and a divine-like way. There is no surprise. There is no pouring forth of rapture. There is nothing of the sensational story-writer. God's own Spirit guides

the pen from which the narrative flows, and that Spirit, knowing that what has been done is simply a God-like thing, writes the story as a mere matter of course. The story carries inherent evidence of its divine origin. Has it come from the Spirit of God? Then it must be full of instruction and of practical value for all ages.

## II. THE USES OF THE NARRATIVE.

1. *It is of use to illustrate the influence and honor conferred by the Lord upon good men.*

Behold! he uses good men as the medium of his miraculous agency. They are his organs of work. Who does not have his views of human nature raised and solemnized as he reads the wonderful miracles which the Almighty wrought of old through the agency of good men like Elisha? It serves to foreshadow the wonderful power which good men when perfected in eternity may possess. If men like Elisha, and all miracle-workers, were privileged by the Lord to achieve divine marvels when here in a corrupt world, and they also imperfect, what may we not hope they will do in the world above, when they shall be the perfect organs of the divine will! I take it that the grandest miracles here are only types and symbols of their splendid achievements there. We know not how great are the deeds which we shall be commissioned to do in the other and higher life.

2. *It is of use to illustrate the fact that even children may die.*

I would not cast a shadow over young life, but here is a fact which should not be kept from our boys and girls. Children die. If they die they should be ready for death. Trusting Christ, who is the resurrection and life, is readiness for death. He is the Good Shepherd who leads his lambs safely through the valley and shadow of death. When his rod and his staff are the stay of children they need fear no evil. Children die. There are graves of a span long in our cemeteries. A soul passes into death at every tick of the clock, and every other soul is the soul of a child. Half the human race die in childhood. There is only one Methuselah mentioned in the Bible. Old people are scarce. David's child dies a mere babe. The daughter of Jairus was only twelve when she died. Here is the dead boy of the Shunammite. Children die. Therefore let children early seek the Lord. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

3. *It is of use to illustrate the existence and safety of children when taken from us by death.*

The mourning parent says, "This mother received her child back from death; I cannot get mine back. Her story mocks me." It does not mock you. It is true you cannot get your child back from death; but it is just as true that you may get comfort from the story. Did this woman get her son back from the dead? Then death did not blot her child out of existence. Her child in death was safe with God. Its coming back proves all this. Its coming back has a grand mission. It



has comforted bereaved parents ever since. It has assured them that their children in death still exist and are in the hands of God. They could come back if it were best for them to do so. This woman's child came back, and so did the child of the widow of Zarephath, that there might be two witnesses to prove that our children in death still exist and are safe; now that this fact has been established, there is no need for others to return, so our children stay with God in the upper home. They go from us because the Saviour says, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

"Around the throne of God in heaven  
Thousands of children stand,  
Children whose sins are all forgiven,  
A holy, happy band,  
Singing Glory, glory, glory!"

All this is comforting to those who mourn for their departed children, and God means it to be so. For this end was the story written. Does any one say, "But it is sad to part with one's children. Why does God take them from us?" We answer, He takes them to himself that our hearts may be drawn along with them. He houses our treasures in heaven, that our hearts may be housed there. Some one has said, "God never takes children except when their going is designed as a means of grace." I almost believe the saying. I heard a minister say that he had one little book in his library which he puts into the hands of bereaved parents. That book is usually effective.

It interprets their sorrow. It is a book of three pictures. The first picture is that of a little child, the pride of the home, sick in its mother's arms. Anxiety stands out on the faces of its parents. The second picture is that of a coffined form, with the parents bowed in despair and crushed with grief. The third picture is that of the angel form of the child at the gates of glory looking earthward and beckoning to its parents to come to heaven. Has God taken from you your children, let this little book teach you.

4. *It is of use to illustrate the daring of faith.*

The daring of the Shunammite's faith was magnificent. So was Elisha's. It is doubtless to the faith of the Shunammite that reference is made in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews where it is said that "by faith women received their dead raised to life again." She believed that God could raise her son. He had done a like deed. She based her faith on the power of God. He had given her this son, and the gift displayed a power like that seen in the resurrection. Given the almighty power of God, and the resurrection is assured provided God wills. Paul based his argument for the resurrection upon the power of God: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" Her faith reasoned on this order: God has shown himself equal to raising the dead; he can if he will. There is more of divine power seen in rolling the sun in its sphere from age to age than in causing it to pause an hour in its march; there is more divine power

seen in the golden fields of every harvest than in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes; there is more of God seen in the myriads of existences that come fresh every day from his hand than in the raising of one poor child to life. Let us bring our faith into the presence of the faith of the Shunammite, that it may learn to reason and to venture. With the omnipotence of God as an instrumentality with which to work, what may not our faith do?

5. *It is of use to illustrate God's ability to usher in the grand resurrection day predicted by the Book.*

Taken with the other instances of recorded resurrections, it forms part of the cumulative testimony looking forward to the general resurrection. It justifies hope that this foretold day will dawn. What a day that will be let your regenerated imagination picture. The glad reunions of that day let the reunion between this mother and boy typify. It was not in vain that the Shunammite lived her trying life. From out of her experience comes one of the strong arguments for the general resurrection day. When we see her and her son on that day we shall freely admit this.

## NAAMAN'S RASH ANGER; OR THE PLAY OF TEMPER IN HUMAN LIFE.

"BUT NAAMAN WAS WROTH AND WENT AWAY, AND SAID, BEHOLD, I THOUGHT, HE WILL SURELY COME OUT TO ME, AND STAND AND CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD HIS GOD, AND STRIKE HIS HAND OVER THE PLACE, AND RECOVER THE LEPER." "SO HE TURNED AND WENT AWAY IN A RAGE."  
—2 *Kings* 5:11, 12.

No story in the divine Book is more manifold in its lessons than the story of Naaman the Syrian. It comes into the history of the Hebrews as a magnificent parenthesis. It is like a sparkling diamond in the midst of sparkling amethysts. It reminds me of the poet's description of the daisy which leaps as if by magic from between the roots of the green grass and whitens our meadows. The poet describes the daisy as a beautiful wheel with golden axle and silver spokes. The thrilling facts of this story form a golden axle, and the many practical lessons issuing from these facts are the silver spokes which branch out on all sides. Let me enumerate: The story teaches us the great breadth of the mercy and power of our God. His power is omnipotent. The most virulent of diseases are as nothing before it. It can cure leprosy without means, by a simple volition. It was not the water of the Jordan that cured Naaman, it was the volition of the God of Israel. The Jordan separated from God was utterly useless. God's power is grand, but the story tells us that his



mercy is just as grand. His mercy reaches even unto the heathen. It works wonders for the heathen.

The story teaches the awful results of the sin of covetousness. Look at Gehazi, as white as snow with leprosy! Covetousness contaminates and defiles and rots the whole moral man.

The story teaches the wide and salutary influence of a religious child. It was a little Hebrew maid, exercising her religious faith in the heathen land to which she had been carried captive, that introduced Naaman to Elisha.

The story teaches the impressive power of religion in a holy life. To the mind of the little maid Elisha, the man of God, was the embodiment of true religion, and she believed in Elisha. She could never forget the prophet of the true God. He was God's living epistle. Religion in human life, that is what the world needs. That is religion vitalized. That is religion in a form that takes hold of and that sways the human mind and soul. That is religion in a form in which it can never be forgotten. Give the community such men as Elisha, who are religion in flesh and blood, and even the children will be won to God.

The story teaches the madness and folly of allowing life to be controlled by an unlawful outburst and play of temper.

The latter lesson is the lesson with which we are concerned in this study. We are to use Naaman the Syrian, who is under a momentary spell of unreasonable wrath, as an object lesson showing the ill effects of rash anger.

## THE MAN AND THE SCENE.

We have always admired Naaman. He was a great man. It is natural to admire that which is great, whether it be animate or inanimate—a great mountain, a great river, a great cataract, a great tree, a great ocean, a great man. We are so constituted that greatness in itself calls out admiration. Naaman was a man among men. He sacrificed self for country. He was patriotic. He led the armies of the nation. He was the Gen. Grant of Syria.

We not only admire Naaman, we sympathize with him. Just think of it! he was a leper. That means no further service for the State. That means a future filled with untold agony. Do you know what it is to be a leper? A leper, when his disease is fully under headway, is a walking corpse. He is ghastly and of a deathly pallor. His bones are full of decay. His beautiful countenance is changed and made horrid; the nostrils swell, the eyelids drop off, the lips are eaten away, joint after joint rots and falls. When the disease is at its height the man is nothing but a horrible mass of animated rubbish. As Naaman comes to the door of Elisha's house there is only one foul spot in his body, but that one foul spot is leprosy, and it carries in it an awful future. This Naaman knows. No wonder that he followed even the pointing of a child to the prophet's house. He would have gone to the ends of the earth for a cure.

And yet how nearly he missed the cure! That

is the point before us. A fit of rash anger almost robbed him of that for which he would have given all his wealth. An outburst of passion so blinded him that he was unable to see the cure when he stood face to face with it. We are surprised as we see Naaman storming before the home of Elisha. We are surprised, because usually a man who is successful in commanding men as Naaman was is a man who first of all commands himself. But thus it is: men often fail in their strongest points. Moses, who is noted for his meekness, loses his temper. Elijah, noted for his daring, flees discouraged at the threat of a woman, and throws himself down under a juniper-tree and asks to die. John, the disciple of love, cries to Jesus, "Command fire to fall from the sky and destroy these Samaritan villages." Naaman failed at his strong point.

But let us be just to Naaman! The way he recovered from anger, I think, shows that anger was not the leading characteristic of the man. Reason was dethroned but for a moment. It immediately regained itself and recognized an argument, even when that was presented by an underling. "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean!" That was a wise servant, and he put his thought to his master in a wise way. He put it in the form of a question. There is nothing like a question to reach and sway the mind and set it in normal operation. But this was a pe-

cularly strong question. It was not dictatorial. It was a humble question. It was a question which introduced mad Naaman to the calm and self-controlled Naaman. It was an appeal from Naaman drunk with rage to Naaman sobered by reason and common-sense. Gen. Naaman lost the battle which was fought in his soul that day; but his servant retrieved it and won the final victory for him between irritated passion and reason.

Naaman's anger arose from wrong causes. It arose from pride, that deep root from which grows many a crime. He was mortified. His native land had been insulted. The insignificant Jordan, which never turned a wheel and which ran into the Dead Sea, had been rated above the far-famed rivers Abana and Pharpar. But Naaman had not come into Judæa to match rivers, neither had he come to receive honors from men; he had come for a cure. Yet he forgot all this in his outburst of passion. Bad temper always forgets to reason.

Mark the growth in the unlawful anger of Naaman. It is first said that he was wroth; then finally it is said that he was in a rage. Rage is wrath storming. It is wrath worked up to the highest pitch. It is the wind of passion in a hurricane. What caused this growth? Naaman's words. If he had muffled his wrath in silence he might the more easily have controlled it; but he did not. He let his wrath pour itself out in words, and his hot words made his feelings hotter and hotter, until words and feelings incorporated themselves into deeds. He wheeled his cavalcade right about



and at a furious pace pushed back Syria-ward. See the madman! He should leave his leprosy here in Judæa, but he is taking it back with him to Syria. This is a full exhibit of unreasonable anger. Unlawful and unreasonable anger, when it is allowed full play in a man's life, means death, the death of a man's reputation, the death of a man's influence, the death of a man's happiness. When you are tempted to give way to rage and irritability and unreasonable passion, think of Naaman the Syrian and remember his narrow escape from an awful doom.

But we have spent long enough time with Naaman's rage and its fatal trend. We have learned from him this one thing, the indispensableness of disciplining temper. A man may have all the other gifts and yet fail because he has not the gift of self-control. Without self-control Naaman will lose his journey from Syria to Judæa, he will lose the one golden opportunity of his life, he will lose his very life itself. But with self-control Naaman will reach deliverance from his leprosy, will retain his place as the great general of his nation, and will step out in a golden future a new man full of health and bounding hope and robust life.

But let us not be too sweeping in the denunciation of anger. All anger is not sinful.

Anger is sinful only when it springs from selfishness and malevolence, or when it is causeless, or when it is beyond its cause, or when it is expressed by unhallowed words and actions. It is

right or wrong according to the object to which it is directed, or according to its degree, or according to its duration. It should always be governed and restrained by the laws of truth, justice, and benevolence, which teach when and how to be angry.

All of us have instances before our minds in which anger was real nobility. We may have attended indignation meetings which were positive means of grace and which were spiritually refreshing. One case of righteous anger stands out very vividly in my mind among recollections of the past: it took place upon the streets of New York, and was in connection with the Orangemen's riot in 1871. Block upon block of the city was crowded for a mile or more; cannon commanded the streets. The Seventh Regiment, New York's pride, was marching up Eighth Avenue at the double-quick. Within a few feet of me there was a little child standing and looking at the moving regiment. She came from an Orangeman's home, for she had a bow of orange ribbon in her hair. A brute of a man seeing it, a man who wore the green, was so stirred with feelings of bitterness that he put his revolver back of the innocent child's head and fired a fatal bullet through her brain. In a moment she lay before him a corpse. That shot sent a thrill of righteous wrath and indignation through every man in the marching regiment, and before the echo of the shot ceased to ring in the air a hundred rifles belched forth their fire of death and with a voice

like that of thunder pronounced the wretch's doom. The man as I looked upon him was literally riddled. But that was not all; the ten thousand on-lookers applauded the act of the regiment, and the whole country at large said Amen! Was that outburst of anger sinful? Nay. It was the justice of God, and the justice of humanity, talking through loyal bullets. There is something majestic and divine in righteous anger. There is something in it that speaks to the very soul of man. Horace Smith calls anger "the protective power in man," and he thus illustrates his thought. He writes: "Without any other armor than an offended frown, an indignant eye, and a rebuking voice, decrepit age, timid womanhood, and the weakest of our species may daunt the most daring; for there is something most formidable in the mere sight of wrath, even when it is incapable of inflicting any chastisement on its provoker. It is a moral power which tends to repair the inequality of physical power and to approximate the strong and the weak towards the same level."

#### A PRACTICAL QUESTION.

It is with rash anger that we are now dealing, and the question is, How can we keep ourselves from it?

##### 1. *Use the power of reflection.*

(a.) Reflect upon this fact: No man can undo the evil he inflicts while in his angry mood. For example, in anger you speak words against your neighbor's reputation which are as keen as the sting

of fire. They are slanderous words, as words suggested by unlawful anger usually are. You may in your cool moments repent of these words, but can you recall them? Or can you undo the evil which they have originated? No. You cannot undo them, neither can you stop their pernicious consequences. A little word dropped by you against your brother is like a pistol shot fired among the mountains. The sharp report is caught up and intensified and echoed by rocks and caves till it emulates the thunder. The moment the word is spoken it is beyond recall. It passes from mouth to mouth and receives fresh exaggeration as it goes. In sorrow you may try to stop its consequences: you may publicly prove its falsehood, explain it, annihilate it, and yet years after you thought it had been disposed of for ever, the mention of a name wakes up associations in the mind of some one who heard it, and he gives it a new circulation.

(b.) Reflect upon this fact: kindness in dealing with men is more powerful and more Godlike than anger. The finest illustration of this occurs in Victor Hugo's justly celebrated novel, and it deserves to be written in letters of gold. You remember how Jean Valjean, who had been known to himself and others for nineteen years as No. 5623, and who had at last been dismissed from the galleys on a ticket-of-leave, found no reception from men and no place to rest. He was even ejected from a dog-kennel into which he had crawled one night for shelter. He went despairingly on through dust and heat, saying, "I am not



even a dog!" But by-and-by he comes to the house of the good old Bishop Myriel. He knocks and enters and tells his story. The bishop, to the great discomfiture of his housekeeper and to the wonderment of Valjean, orders a bedroom to be prepared for him, and invites him in the meantime to take a seat at the supper table. After supper the bishop conducts him to his room, and the poor man lies down and falls asleep.

In the middle of the night he awakes and begins to think; and the result of his thinking is, that he will get up and make off with the silver dishes which he had seen on the table the previous evening. He does so, and is soon captured by the police and brought back. The bishop dismisses the police, pretending that he had made the man a present of the silver, and asking why he had not taken the candlesticks as well. When they were left alone, he says to the astonishment of the thief, "Jean Valjean, my brother, never forget that you have promised to employ this silver, which I have given you, in becoming an honest man. You belong no more to evil, but to good. I have bought your soul. I reclaim it from black thoughts and the spirit of perdition, and I give it to God." You know the result. From that day Valjean was a changed man. He became one of the noblest characters in the whole range of the world's fiction. Fiction? Yes; but fiction that is true to fact. Reflection often shows us that we can do more for God, and for our fellow-man, by deferring our anger and by putting gentleness into its place.

*2. Keep filling up the Christian personality with love.*

Love is of God, and when we keep our souls filled with it, it assimilates to God and makes us Godlike in all our ways. The tendency of love is to make us perfect. Now good temper comes from a perfect state of soul. I use the word perfect of course with large modification. The good temper of the soul is produced just as the good temper of the body is produced, by a right balance. The body is in good temper when? When the nervous system and the circulating system and the nutritive system are well balanced. Even so the soul is in good temper when the reason and the conscience and the will and the desires are properly balanced. What can balance them? Love, and only love. The soul is like a harp with many strings. That the harp may be in perfect accord, all the strings of the harp need to be tuned. Bad temper is cured as the musician cures discord in his harp. Love is the only power that can properly tune all the chords of the heart. Love is the musician in the spiritual realm.

## GEHAZI PUNISHED.

"BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT."—*Num.* 32:23.

THE Bible frequently sets truth and error in strong light by contrasts. There is a passage in the New Testament in some respects parallel to the story of Gehazi's sin, which, though marred by the arbitrary division into chapters and verses, will serve as an illustration. In connection with the community of goods in the early church the record is made of Barnabas, who "having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet;" and immediately following is the contrast, "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession and kept back part of the price." So having studied the wonderful story of the faith and healing of Naaman the Syrian, we turn to the sad picture of the sin and punishment of Gehazi, that the lessons of both may be the more deeply fixed in our hearts.

When Naaman came up from the Jordan miraculously healed, the natural tendency of his joy would have been homeward. But nobler impulses influenced him, and he returns to the "man of God" with two things in mind: (1) to renounce the fundamental error of heathenism, that every nation had its own god, to acknowledge that "there is no God in all the earth but in Israel," and to crave a little of the soil of the land on which he may sacrifice to Jehovah. (2) Out of his abund-

ance to manifest his gratitude in paying well for the healing of the leprosy. Peremptorily and persistently the prophet refuses the gift in the hearing of his servant, who up to this time seems to have borne a good reputation, and destined possibly to succeed his master as Elisha succeeded Elijah; but the devil enters his heart and prompts the sin that proved his ruin.

1. Let us consider Gehazi's sin. There was *covetousness* in it. He had heard the offer of the grateful Syrian and Elisha's refusal, and the desire to obtain a portion of this princely gift overcame him. No doubt he quieted conscience with the thought that Naaman was rich enough to give what he asked without missing it, and generous enough to feel gratified rather than robbed by this disposal of his wealth. Besides had he not had some part in the healing of the leper? Was he not the servant of the prophet? Surely he might ask and obtain a servant's portion, and of the ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold he would desire but one talent and but two of the ten changes of raiment. Wealth is a comparative term, and the amount a man covets is ever in proportion to his previous experience. How mighty are the inborn lusts of the human heart! Even in the case of those who have enjoyed exceptional advantages in the society of the followers of Christ, who have heard and read the Word of God daily, and who have had the example of holy conduct constantly before their eyes, lusts arise, take possession of them, and carry them away captive.



(James 1:13-15; Matt. 15:19.) Most incomprehensible, most depraved, most terrible of all deceptions, and yet perhaps, especially in our own country, most common, is the deceit of riches. (1 Tim. 6:9-12.)

There was *theft* in it. He took that which was not his own, received it for a certain named purpose with intent to appropriate it to himself. This is added guilt, for it is not always true that the covetous man is also dishonest. But it is true, as in this case and in the long list of defalcations, betrayal of trusts, open robberies, with which we are too familiar, that the man who covets and allows his desire to become his master, places himself under temptation to satisfy that desire without scruples as to means. Covetousness is the root of all evil. It is not necessary to go to the Old Testament to learn this lesson. Alas! there is hardly a community in our land that does not furnish its examples.

There was *falsehood* in it. Not one, but repeated falsehoods. The story he told to Naaman as his excuse, or rather the prophet's, for taking a portion of the offered present was totally false, and his answer to the searching question of Elisha was equally so. This is the curse that rests upon a lie, that the man who speaks a falsehood involves himself more and more in new lies, becoming the abject slave of "him who, when he speaketh a lie, speaketh of his own." But this repeated untruthfulness was not the extent of Gehazi's sin. It was not ordinary deceit that he practised. The

words that Peter used of Ananias were true of him: "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." His sin was far more reaching than he thought, and while he intended simply a clever device to increase his own worldly goods, he had cast a foul blot upon the words of his master and the work God had wrought upon a heathen. Menken says truly, "A thousand deceits and dishonesties might have been committed, by all of which not one of the dear and holy interests would have been injured which in this case were in danger, and which, by this act, were criminally and fruitlessly betrayed."

There was *hypocrisy* in it. Hypocrisy is falsehood in manner, as a lie is falsehood in speech. He must carry out his deceit in action, and so having bestowed his ill-gotten gain in his house, and dismissed the servants of Naaman at the tower or hill which interrupted the view from the dwelling of Elisha, he comes with unconcerned and indifferent manner into the presence of the prophet, expecting by this hypocrisy to disarm suspicion and conceal the fact of his absence.

But his sin was known. The Psalmist speaks of *secret* sins, but in fact there are no secret sins. Men may not know of them, but they are all naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. There are witnesses within and witnesses without, and the day shall declare it. The eyes of God are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. There is no better illustration of this heart-searching truth than that told of the

astronomer Mitchell. Being engaged in making some observations on the sun, and watching it as it descended to the limits of the western horizon, suddenly there came into the field of the telescope the top of a hill some seven miles distant. On this hill was an apple orchard, and in one of the trees were two boys engaged in stealing the fruit. One was gathering the apples, while his companion, keeping watch, was enjoying the confidence that their act was undiscovered. But there sat the astronomer, seven miles away, through the powerful eye of his great telescope seeing and noting every movement as plainly as if he had been concealed behind one of the trees of the orchard. Gehazi's sin was carefully planned and skilfully executed. Others with equal cunning have kept their iniquity longer hid, but every sin is known and every sin will be brought to light. If God himself arms his prophets with the gift to be witnesses of hidden sin and to bring it to the light, as Nathan in David's case, and Elisha in Gehazi's, and Peter in that of Ananias, how much more will He, before whose judgment seat we must all appear, bring that to light which now lies hidden in darkness and reveal the secret counsels of the heart!

2. Let us now consider the *punishment* of Gehazi.

It was *swift*. It comes upon us with startling suddenness in the record. The conversation between the prophet and the guilty servant was brief, as such conversations usually are, and then

immediately comes the sentence, "The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."

It was *public*. This was befitting. He had done his wrong secretly. In the departure of Naaman and his retinue to a far-distant land, and by his own cunning, he expected himself to be the sole custodian of the knowledge of his sin, and therefore God brought it out before Israel and before the sun. God set his mark upon him, so that wherever he went he would bear the visible tokens of his sin and of the divine justice. His punishment, severe as it was, was not therefore arbitrarily chosen, but proceeded out of his transgression and corresponded to it. The leprosy of Naaman became the leprosy of Gehazi, and as Naaman was a living monument of the saving might and grace of Jehovah, so Gehazi became a solemn warning of his retributive justice. Similar examples are not wanting in our own day. The wicked often reap that which they sow of evil and justly are made to eat the fruit of their own devices. It is very true many men seem to sin with impunity, and "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Eccl. 8:11. God manifestly punishes some sins in this life lest men should deny his justice, and yet he does not punish every sin here lest men should deny a hereafter with its rewards and punishments.



His punishment *involved others* besides himself. Some forms of leprosy at least are hereditary, and in this case it was so by divine appointment. Travellers have not failed to notice the numbers of miserable lepers which are found to this day in the vicinity of Sebastieh and at Nablus. This district is well known to be the present home of all the Samaritans, and these miserable beings may be the heirs of that heritage of Gehazi, the fearful doom that should cleave to his seed for ever. God is merciful and gracious; of this the evidence is everywhere, and nowhere more than in his abounding grace; but God is just. We are social beings, and none of us can sin and bear the results alone.

This is a sad lesson. It would not have been recorded, however, unless the study of it were profitable. We have alluded already to covetousness as one of the crying evils of the times. There is a greed of gold which bids fair to bring in its train and for its gratification a multitude of temptations. Let us not forget that there is also a leprosy of riches. There is a curse which cleaves to wealth when it is ill-gotten or ill-used. Its bitter fruit is often eaten also by the children. Of how many may it be said, "Thou hast gotten thee gold, but leprosy shall cleave to thee and to thy seed for ever!"

ELISHA AT DOTHAN; OR THE SUPER-  
NATURAL PROTECTION OF THE  
CHILD OF GOD.

"AND ELISHA PRAYED AND SAID, LORD, I PRAY THEE, OPEN HIS EYES, THAT HE MAY SEE. AND THE LORD OPENED THE EYES OF THE YOUNG MAN, AND HE SAW: AND, BEHOLD, THE MOUNTAIN WAS FULL OF HORSES AND CHARIOTS OF FIRE ROUND ABOUT ELISHA."—2 *Kings* 6:17.

SYRIA took the aggressive: Ben-hadad, its king, made frequent incursions into the territory of Israel for the sake of carrying off plunder. These raids were planned with the greatest care. Particular places were chosen, and the forces of Syria were concentrated and hurled against these particular places. But it happened whenever an attack was made that the spot stormed was fortified, and the might of Israel defeated the might of Syria. Ben-hadad was out-generaled at every point. So accurately were his purposes foreknown by Jehoram, the king of Israel, that he could explain this foreknowledge only upon this hypothesis: "Some one in my confidence acts the traitor and gives away my secrets."

Taking for granted that he was betrayed by some traitor in the camp, Ben-hadad called his generals together and held a council of war. When the council was convened he startled his generals with the blunt question, "Who is the traitor of this company?" When he put the question, I can imagine that his eye swept the faces of

those present with a detective's skill, that it might pick out the surprised and perturbed traitor. But if the traitor was there, the sudden and piercing question did not throw him off his guard. There was no traitor in the camp. One of Ben-hadad's servants rises in the council of war and says, "Hear me! Elisha, the man of God, he it is who tells Jehoram what our plans are. The God of this prophet gives him such power that he can look upon the king in the deepest secrecy of his harem." How this servant knew about the prophet Elisha we are not told. Conjecture has it that he was one of the staff of Gen. Naaman whom Elisha cured of leprosy. In that cure he gave evidence of his power to see unseen and future things. However the man knew Elisha, his theory was the correct one. It was Elisha who told Jehoram the purposes of Ben-hadad and who advised him what to do. He saw Ben-hadad's plans as clearly as Ben-hadad himself saw them, and he reported them as accurately as Ben-hadad could have reported them.

When the king of Syria discovered the source of Jehoram's foreknowledge, he determined to capture Elisha and keep him from helping Jehoram. He spied out where he was, in Dothan, and hemmed in the town by what he considered a complete siege, a siege from which there could be no possible escape. It seems strange that it did not occur to Ben-hadad that Elisha could see all the plans which he formed against him. Such was the protection of the prophet of God that it

was impossible for any human agency to capture him. The effort to put Elisha out of the way was like the effort to put Christ out of the way by sealing him in a tomb and putting the Roman army around his grave as a guard. It was as futile as the effort of Herod to imprison Peter. This Ben-hadad soon discovered.

The story of the siege is very interesting. Ere the men of Dothan were aware, the town was completely surrounded by the warriors of Syria. When Elisha awoke he looked out upon hosts of armed men. But the sight troubled him not one whit. It was different, however, with his new and young servant. The sight struck horror into his soul, and with terror in his voice he cried, "Alas! my master, what shall we do?" The terrified servant sets off by contrast the unmoved prophet. In the two men we have illustrations of unbelief and belief, walking by faith and walking by sight. What is the explanation of the difference between the states of mind of the prophet and of his servant? Did not Elisha see the mighty forces arrayed against him, did he not recognize the danger? He did. But while he recognized the danger he recognized his protection. He heard the tramp of the Syrian horse and the rumble of the Syrian chariot, but at the same time he heard and saw the horses and chariots from the celestial world. His faith made this real to him. Hence the reply which he gave his servant when he was paralyzed by fear. "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they



that be with them." At first the words of the prophet would appear but vain words to the servant. They were absurdity itself. They were a contradiction of what he saw. The prophet saw all this expressed in his servant's face, and this led him to pray that God would open his eyes.

His prayer was at once answered. The eyes of the young man were opened and he saw the invincible troops of God between him and the foe. He saw that the matchless and resistless armies of heaven were fighting for the prophet. He saw that he was surrounded by a supernatural body-guard. "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

In his picture, "the Sistine Madonna," the artist Raphael has represented the air around the virgin and child as filled with angelic faces. The conception is true. There are invisible guards around all of the good. This is what Elisha saw and what his young servant saw. The sight which met the young man when the eyes of his soul were opened was the angelic host taking the form or appearance of horses and chariots of fire, because this form was best suited to allay his fears and to assure him of safety against his present danger. This is not the only place in the Scriptures where angels are presented under the figure of chariots, the symbols of protecting power. The Psalmist sings in the sixty-eighth Psalm, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thou-

sands of angels! the Lord is among them." By the power which God bestowed, Elisha and his servant looked out upon the spiritual universe with the eyes of their soul, as we shall look out upon it when we enter heaven. They were granted a heavenly vision before its time, just as Paul was when he was caught up into the third heaven and saw the things which the redeemed see. God allowed them to see what they saw, that they might be witnesses to us, testifying to the reality of the supernatural protection of the child of God. The privilege granted them was a miracle which has blessed the world ever since. God virtually gave the servant of Elisha a repetition of the vision of Jacob at Mahanaim, when the patriarch saw a double army of angels encamped around him.

When Elisha had secured quietness and courage for his servant he gave his attention to the besieging army of Syria. God smote them so that they were dazed and bewildered, and Elisha led them to Samaria, the walled capital of Israel. He there prayed to God to give them sight again, and when they saw again they found themselves the prisoners of Jehoram. When Jehoram was about to slay them, Elisha directed that mercy be shown them, that they be spared and feasted and sent in safety to their king. All that Elisha required was done, and this incident becomes an object lesson illustrating and confirming the value and truth of the New Testament precept, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals

of fire on his head." The working of the precept is set forth by the words with which the history closes: "So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel."

#### PRACTICAL POINTS.

*1. There are beings in the universe superior to man, and these beings live in helpful relations with the children of God.*

They are the angels who have kept their first estate. The angelic beings are strong in their uprightness and in their allegiance to God. Do you say that the angels are invisible and therefore you will not believe in their existence? Their invisibility is no reason for your unbelief. God is invisible, but you believe in his existence. Your soul is invisible, but you believe in its existence. You see the works of God, you see the works of your soul. Works prove their existence. Works prove the existence and power of angels. Look at their works spread out on the page of Scripture: Elisha guarded against intended captivity; 185,000 Assyrians dead before the besieged Jerusalem; the first-born lifeless in every home of Egypt. No one saw the angel pierce with his meteor sword or run his awful course, but here were the dead of Assyria and of Egypt, and these were enough to prove the angel's existence notwithstanding his invisibility. The fact is, science teaches us that unseen powers exist and that they are the greatest powers. Electric essences, though unseen, are mightier than the densest rocks and

metals which are seen. It is scientific to believe in the invisible.

Do you assert that you have no interest in the subject of angels, and that therefore you are an agnostic on the existence of angels? This defence will not serve you. Your agnosticism is your sin. Elisha was no agnostic, neither was his enlightened servant. Bible writers were not agnostics. No less than fifteen of them discourse of angels and describe them and their work. One design of this Scripture before us is to lift the curtain of the invisible world and give us a look at the ministry of angels, that we may recognize them as allies in the battle of life and feel secure in their friendship. The Scripture teaches us that the angels serve God by serving us.

That we may know that these narratives of far-away ministries of angels are for our comfort, and that they depict the angelic blessings of the present day, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that one of the glories of the New Testament dispensation is this, "We have come to an innumerable company of angels," and they are servants of all those who are the heirs of salvation. We cannot coolly close the book of angelic lore and leave it unread without robbing ourselves of blessedness, and without remaining in ignorance of our greatest friends, who embody the greatest forces in the universe. They give counsel to the children of God; an angel counselled Hagar. They cheer the heart; a company of angels met Jacob and cheered him. They bring answers



to prayer; Gabriel brought Daniel the answer to his prayer. They carry our spirit to heaven at death; angels carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. They act in the great realm of providence and, according to the book of Revelation, turn the great wheels of God's providential government. They burst the seals, kindle the lightnings, roll the thunders of eternal justice, and hold the storms in their hands and let them not go until the righteous of God are made safe. We owe the angels more than we imagine. We all need to be visited by the dream of a noted child of God. He dreamed that he had died and had gone up to the gates of heaven. Before admission he was compelled, however, to tarry a while in a picture-room. He looked from scene to scene upon the canvas there, and all appeared familiar to him. At last he recognized the scenes as from his own life, and in each presentation he was in peril of some kind; but angels sent of God were guarding or directing him. The disclosure thus made put his whole life into a new light and filled his heart with gratitude. A wider recognition of our invisible guards would fill us with gratitude and give us higher and truer ideas of life. It would transfigure our life.

2. *There is nothing more certain than the security of God's people and of God's cause.*

More and mightier are the forces in alliance with them than the forces banded against them. God is on their side. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Alliance with God means majority and might and victory. For a man or for a

cause to be bound up in the purposes of infinite love, and to be girt about by the arms of Almighty power, means a strong defence. There are angels for every saint; even the beggar Lazarus is served by angels. There are angels for every danger. For every Syrian horse there is a duplicate horse of fire, and for every Syrian chariot there is a duplicate chariot of fire. Satan has many allies and forces, but God's allies and forces overmatch them. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of God is able to lift up a standard against him.

3. *The greatest need of man is the power of spiritual sight to discern the blessings which are his.*

It was the possession of this power that lifted Elisha so far above his servant. The servant trembled and was pierced with an anguish of fear; but Elisha, seeing the invisible, was calm and self-contained and courageous and equable in spirit. Do we stand before him and say, "O solitary and besieged man of God, what is the secret of thy peace and confidence and heroism?" The prophet replies, "God has opened the eyes of my soul, so that I see the great invisible realities and my alliance with them." Seeing the invisible, or the open spiritual eye, this is what makes men of the type of Elisha. It is this that creates Moses and the prophets and the apostles and the reformers and martyrs. It is this that fills the soul with courage and enterprise and joy and the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

There are degrees of spiritual vision; we should seek the highest degrees. It is true that we may

be safe although we have not the high degrees of vision ; it is true that the celestial horses and chariots were at Dothan even while the young servant's eyes are closed ; but this must be noticed, the comfort of feeling safe is lost. There may be safety when the spiritual eyes are closed or dim, but the soul may be racked and tortured with agony because we do not see our safety. A Union soldier escaped from the Confederate prison. He wandered for days seeking the Union lines. In the dusk of twilight he ran across what he supposed was a Confederate camp. He was surrounded and captured. He suffered agonies at the thought of being a prisoner again. When he was brought by his captors to a place where he could see, comfort and joy took the place of agony, for his eyes made it plain to him that his captors wore the blue uniform and not the gray. His experience is a type of the experience of the child of God while the eyes of his soul remain unopen. He is full of fear and apprehension because he is not able to recognize the strong guard of friends which God has thrown around him. Our comfort in life demands the opening of the eyes of the soul.

If the opening of the eyes of the soul be such a possession, the practical question which clamors for an answer is, How can the opening of the eyes of the soul be secured ? Does this Scripture give us any help towards an answer ? It does. It gives us the whole answer ; it tells us how. The opening of the eyes of the soul is the work of God ; and

we may secure it by means of prayer. The men of prayer are the men of large spiritual vision. Elisha was a man of large spiritual vision, and he was a man of prayer. By prayer he not only secured spiritual vision for himself, he secured it also for his unbelieving and dismayed servant. He might have reasoned with his servant, but he did not; he prayed. There are times when praying will do for our friends and neighbors what reasoning cannot do. Parent, you have failed to secure spiritual vision for your child by means of reasoning, pray for your child. Ask God to give it the vision of faith. Be an Elisha to it. Sabbath-school teachers, Christian workers, do ye also learn from Elisha. Pray your scholars and friends into the mysteries of the kingdom of Christ. Daniel was a man of large spiritual vision, and he was a man of prayer. It was when he and his three companions had prayed that God opened his eyes so that he saw the hidden things in the dream of the king. It was when he prayed that God sent visions of the future kingdom of Christ and explained these visions. Pray to God for knowledge, and he will send you knowledge. Pray to God for protection, and "he will give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." Pray to God to make the great spiritual realities near and felt things to you, and he will give you the eyes of faith to see them.



## SAVED FROM FAMINE.

"OH THAT MEN WOULD PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS GOODNESS, AND  
FOR HIS WONDERFUL WORKS TO THE CHILDREN OF MEN!"—  
*Psalms 107:8.*

DAMASCUS is possibly the oldest city in the world; it certainly has had the longest and most persistent existence. We read of it first in the brief account of Abraham's pursuit of Chedor-laomer. (Gen. 14:15.) Eight hundred and seventy-five years afterward we meet with it again when, in the reign of David, "the Syrians of Damascus" "came to succor Hadadezer, king of Zobah" and David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men, and "put garrisons in Syria of Damascus, and the Syrians became servants to David and brought gifts." When Solomon came to the throne the Syrians shook off the yoke, and after the revolt of the ten tribes, Ben-hadad I. and Asa made a league, and Ben-hadad sent his captains "against the cities of Israel." From 1 Kings 20:34 we learn that this same king again invaded Israel and took many cities, and his son Ben-hadad II., during the reign of Ahab, "gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria." His demands and their rejection by Ahab, the account of the battle and the great slaughter of the Syrians, are given in the twentieth chapter of 1 Kings. The

next year the contest is renewed, resulting in the slaughter of a hundred thousand footmen of the Syrians, the surrender and submission of Ben-hadad and Damascus. Three years after Ahab becomes the aggressor, and the encounter, with the fatal result to the king of Israel, is graphically described in the last chapter of the first book of the Kings. Then followed a period of peace, during which the beautiful story of Naaman's journey from Damascus and the healing of his leprosy occurs.

This cessation of hostilities however was not of long continuance. Again Ben-hadad invades Israel, intent on capturing the prophet Elisha; but the host become the captive of the prophet, and, smitten with blindness, are led by him at his will. "After this Ben-hadad gathered all his host, and went up and besieged Samaria." Then occurred that great and remarkable famine when an "ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver," and in their extremity of hunger parents ate their own children. This brings us to the portion of Scripture before us. The city in its dire condition was saved by divine interposition, for "the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled

for their life." In this connection we have an interesting illustration of the confirmation of the accuracy of Scripture by modern science and research, all the more strong and satisfactory from the vehemence with which the foes of the Word have insisted upon its historical errors, and the readiness with which some of the friends of the Word have acknowledged inaccuracy. A comparatively recent commentator says that "the mention of the kings of the Hittites is very strange. No such nation as the Hittites any longer existed, and the kings of Egypt did not interfere in Asiatic affairs throughout this entire period." But more recent investigations explain fully the reason for the panic and the precipitate flight of Ben-hadad's army, and make the rumor which caused the panic a natural one. The Hittite confederacy was one of the most powerful military organizations in Western Asia, and at that very time is now known to have been in alliance with the Egyptians.

No doubt the chief design of this remarkable deliverance was in the interest of his own servant Elisha, as is clear from the connection. The object of the story is to show that there was a prophet in Israel, that God was specially present in the midst of them in the person of his prophets, and that their history and fortunes, their calamities and chastisements, their mercies and deliverances, all were connected with the great plan of redemption. The day of prophets and special messengers is past, but God is still immanent in

the world; he is still working, bringing about the fulness of times when his Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh and all flesh shall see his salvation; and were the history of our own nation to be written, as was that of Israel, by inspired pens, we should recognize both his presence and his plan. But aside from, or rather in connection with, this object of the story there are many profitable truths.

*What weak and contemptible instruments God chooses for his great works.* "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." So here the four leprous men, outcast from the city and despised by the Syrians, were, in the providence of God, the messengers of his grace, announcing to their beleaguered countrymen in the very crisis of their danger the wonderful interposition of Jehovah. Fishermen and publicans were likewise chosen as witnesses of the resurrection of Christ and the proclaimers of the good news of the gospel to the world. And it is a delightful aspect of the Christian faith that it opens so sure a prospect of doing good, to all who are in humble condition or whose talents are too feeble to act in what are called the more public spheres of enterprise and duty. We have reason, all of us, for living to



God in every sphere of life. If there were none of these unpretending but beautiful examples, blooming in depression, sweetening affliction by their Christian patience, adorning poverty by their high integrity, and dying in the Christian heroism of faith—if there were no such examples making their impressions of the dignity and truth of the gospel, who shall prove that our great men who are supposed to accomplish so much by their eloquence, their notable sacrifices and far-reaching plans, would not utterly fail in them?

Again, *how easily God, in his own time and in his own way, can accomplish his purposes of mercy and grace.* This is true of earthly mercies. He can bring days of plenty close upon days of famine and want. The deliverance of Samaria was certainly supernatural and revealed God's presence and interposition, but it is not necessary to regard it as miraculous. In different dispensations God keeps his word with his people in different ways, and his promised succor and deliverance are just as sure to us in the time of need as to his people of old. Therefore we should not despair, but trust in God even when the night is darkest and the difficulties apparently insurmountable. Above all is this true in the contest between the Church of God and the hosts of evil. In the dark region of moral antipathies there is no parallel to the enmity of the carnal mind against God. There are no difficulties equal to those which the ignorance, prejudice, and depraved passions of men offer to the gospel. It is entirely superfluous for the unbeliever to set

in array these elements of hostility. Christianity frankly confesses its weakness, foolishness, nothingness, according to all the ordinary calculations of human motive and volition. But so much the more does it fall back upon another influence which is enlisted in its behalf. Its motto is, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," and thus the strength of the church, like the placing of the key-stone in the otherwise insecure arch, is all the greater for its apparent weakness. This supernatural force every Christian believes to be supplied by the agency of the Holy Ghost, so that the impossible becomes possible, and the action of Christian truth is exalted to a kind of omnipotence. Moreover the existence of this spiritual influence is not a theory but a fact. The Christian Church is its embodiment. The triumphs of the gospel in a grand and ever enlarging series of experiments are the monument but not the limit of this power. How wonderful have been the manifestations of divine power in the history of the church and its missions! so wonderful that an incessant work of conversion spread over all the world has ceased to attract notice, and only the spring tide movements of the wave, in powerful revivals, are remarked. And so to all misgivings within the church, to all skepticism without it as to the deliverance of the church in every hour of peril and as to the final and complete overthrow of the powers of darkness, the Christian has one reply, "I believe in the Holy Ghost!"

Men may talk also of the numbers still stout-hearted and far from righteousness. It is easy to calculate the numbers of the world's inhabitants not even nominally Christian, and the long series of years or centuries which, according to the present employment of men and money or the past success, it will take to Christianize them. Such statistics are useful, and we thank their authors, if they may but excite us to greater liberality and prayer. But here is a power above statistics, as it was a power above statistics which suddenly enlarged the infant church from a hundred and twenty to hundreds of thousands and brought all their gold into one treasury, as it was a power above statistics which in so short a period rescued the half of Europe from a more tenacious gripe than that of any armed host with all its enginery of war. Let this power go forth and it is like sunshine which lightens all lands and melts a thousand snows at once. "This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations; for the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

Again we have the *power of prayer*. From the promise of deliverance spoken by Elisha and his judgment pronounced upon the unbelieving lord, indeed from the whole run of the story, we cannot doubt that the prophet had been in close communion with God and that the deliverance finally accomplished was the fruit of his intercession.

And this mighty power of the Holy Spirit of which we have spoken is not committed indeed to human hands, but the doctrine of prayer, with which that of the Holy Ghost is inseparably connected, supplies a practical basis for men to proceed and the limitation that arises from the sovereignty of God is only a check to his pride but not a restraint to his exertion. Prayer is the grandest power in the entire universe ; it has a more omnipotent force than electricity, gravitation, or any other of the secret forces of nature. The question is not, What can it do? but, What has it not done? It has divided the sea, quenched the violence of fire, stayed the rain from the heavens, and again brought rain, shut the mouths of lions, turned to flight the armies of the aliens, and opened the gates of Paradise. Does it not seem an amazing thing to have such a power in one's hands as to be able to pray? We have heard or read of men who pretended to have a weird and mystic might by which they could call up spirits from the deep, by which they could scare away disease or bring a curse upon one's person or his property, secure happiness or blight with woe. It was all a figment of the fancy, but, were it true, the Christian is a greater magician still. If he has but faith in God what is there impossible to him? He shall be delivered out of the deepest waters; he shall be rescued out of the sorest troubles; he shall be fed in famine, and in pestilence he shall go unscathed; in war he shall be shielded, and in the day of battle delivered from his enemies, while upon count-



less multitudes he shall bring the blessings of heaven. There is nothing, we repeat it, there is no force so tremendous, no energy so marvellous, no power so resistless as the power with which God has endowed every believer who can prevail with him in prayer.

But we must have faith in this, and so once more we see the *sin of doubt and distrust in God's promises*. We are not straitened in God, but in our own weakness of faith. We have not, because we ask not or ask amiss. Our fault lies in a criminal distrust of God's power or his promises; we doubt his ability to keep his word or the sincerity of the word on which he has caused us to hope. No prayer is more needful than that of the disciples of Jesus, "Lord, increase our faith." The Israelitish "lord on whose hand the king leaned" has his representatives in every age even among Christians—men who are ready to confer with flesh and blood, to count numbers, to magnify difficulties, to exaggerate opposing forces. In form, if not in words, the expression of their unbelief is, "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven might this thing be?" And yet did we ever think that this is the very thing which God, in the fulness of his condescension and grace, has promised? "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not *open you the windows of heaven*, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

## JEHU; OR RELIGIOUS ZEAL.

"COME WITH ME AND SEE MY ZEAL FOR THE LORD."—2 *Kings* 10:16.

OUR aim will be to set before us the false zeal of Jehu, and then to gather from it some lessons concerning true zeal, which it suggests by way of contrast.

### I. THE FALSE ZEAL OF JEHU.

Jehu was the tenth king of Israel. The order of the kings of Israel up to this day was as follows: Rehoboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram, and Jehu. This is not the first time that we have met with Jehu. Nearly twenty years prior to this we saw him, in the days of Elijah.

Jehu reigned some twenty-eight years, but history records only the doings of the first year of his reign. The remainder of his reign seems to have been uneventful. His zeal for the Lord blazed and burned itself out like a shaving. There was only one year of blaze and brightness; but there were twenty-seven years of cold dead ashes. He was like some whom we see to-day outside the church; their piety is confined to their youth. He was like men whom we have seen in the church. They rise up suddenly from obscurity, talk an immense amount of orthodoxy for a purpose, give one or two large subscriptions on the most public occasions, have the notice of these

printed and reprinted, copied and recopied in the newspapers and magazines of the church until they have won the reputation of being extremely liberal in the things of the Lord, and then they rest on their laurels and allow others to contribute while they take all the credit. They take for granted that the deceived public does not know them. O ye subtle old Jehus! Both God and man understand your zeal. Your zeal is a false zeal, and time will surely unmask you.

The page of history given to the life of Jehu exalts one characteristic of the man. That characteristic is zeal. This seems to have been the leading characteristic of Jehu. His character is indicated by his public reputation. He had a reputation in Israel as a furious and fast driver. The moment he stepped into the chariot and took the reins in his hand, the horses knew that nothing but a break-neck speed would satisfy. He dashed along the highways of Israel as though he meant to ride over everybody he met or overtook. He was a noted soldier, full of impetuosity and intensity and dash and shrewdness and fiery energy. By physical constitution he was a man of zeal, and God, when he made him king, bade him use his zeal in divine service. There is no morality in mere zeal itself. The purpose for which we use our zeal determines its character. It is by the motive of Jehu that we are to determine Jehu's zeal. He claimed that the glory of the Lord was the aim of his zeal, but its limit and its trend and its source declare that the interest of Jehu was its aim.

In pursuing our study we are compelled to take up this question: *What did Jehu do under the impulse of his zeal?*

HE ANNIHILATED THE HOUSE OF AHAB AND DESTROYED THE BAAL-WORSHIPPERS THROUGHOUT THE LAND.

In planning the destruction of the Baal-worshippers Jehu joined with him Jehonadab the son of Rechab. The family of Rechab belonged to the Kenites. It was from the tribe of the Kenites that Mōses took his wife. The tribe was Arabian. It continues even to this distant day. It formed a friendship with Israel during the wanderings in the wilderness and settled with them in Palestine. Jehonadab was the head of this tribe. He formed them into a community, and gave them peculiar rules of life. He forbade them to live in houses, allowing them only tents; and he forbade them to possess vineyards or to drink wine. As this man was noted for his piety, Jehu rejoiced in his company. It was to him that he said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord." He caused him to ride with him in his chariot. He thus got him publicly to put the stamp of his indorsement upon him. He used him to give character to the measure which he planned and executed. We like the indorsement of those who stand high in the community. The approbation of such men is next to the approbation of conscience. The conscience of Charles IX. was quieted for a time by the *Te Deums* which the Church of Rome sang in honor



of his massacre of the Huguenots. The conscience of the liquor-seller is quieted by the respectability of some of his customers. He reasons that it is just as honorable to sell liquor as it is to drink it.

The zeal of Jehu against Baalism was commendable in its object, but not in its motive and spirit. These were false. So far as I can judge, no moralist can stand up for his methods. He exterminated the worshippers of Baal by falsehood and treachery. Objectively he was right, subjectively he was wrong. He was aiming at right things, but he was doing them in wrong ways. For that which was right God commended him and rewarded him; for that which was wrong God condemned him and pronounced sentence upon him.

The plan which Jehu adopted in the slaughter of the Baalites was this: He proclaimed himself a worshipper of Baal. He then proclaimed a feast to Baal, and invited all Baalites. All the Baalites in the kingdom came. When the temple of Baal was packed, he ordered his armed guard to slay every worshipper. This they did. When every Baalite was slain, he broke the image of the false god and turned the magnificent temple into a place for refuse. Thus he stamped out the worship of Baal from Israel.

The first year of Jehu's reign is certainly a chapter of blood. But we should not allow it to suggest hard thoughts concerning God, as some do. We should remember that in the nation of Israel Baalism was a treason. We should re-

member that the dynasty of Ahab was in rebellion against Jehovah, the true King of Israel. It was the ulcer on the body politic, and God decreed that it should be cut off because it would kill the body. We should remember that the God who was so just and so full of infinite love that he gave his only-begotten Son to the cross, has proven by that gift that he cannot be unjust and that he cannot be unkind. If hard thoughts enter into our mind as we study the history of his doings, the reason is, either we do not have a full history or we misunderstand what is written. If we could see as far into the future as God saw, we would see that it was expedient, and a saving of life, to despatch the whole house of Ahab. They were a murder-breathing family, and if they had been allowed to live would have slain double or treble their number. For an illustration of what we mean let us go to the history of Louis XIV. of France. The king revoked the Edict of Nantes, which allowed religious liberty in France. What followed this revocation? All manner of persecution. Persecution raged until between two and three hundred thousand of the truest sons and daughters of France perished. Now if some one as God's executioner had annihilated Louis XIV. and his family before he revoked the Edict of Nantes and inaugurated the awful persecution, would not the world call that mercy instead of severity? Who would utter a syllable against such an execution? The execution of the household of Ahab was an execution after this order. It kept

murderers from committing further murder. If we could look through and through the dealing of our God, love would be found to be the basis and origin and spirit of all that he does. The execution of judgment is the exercise of love to the innocent and the exposed. God is responsible only for the decree of execution issued against the family of Ahab, not for that which was cruel and false in the manner of its execution. The cruel and false belong to the zeal of Jehu.

## II. LESSONS CONCERNING TRUE ZEAL.

Jehu teaches us by contrast. Our zeal must be the opposite of his zeal. We may learn from failures as well as from successes. We may learn from the false Judas as well as from the true John. If true zeal must be the opposite of the zeal of Jehu, then we may predicate the following things concerning true zeal:

(1.) *True zeal is characterized by right motives.*

Jehu did not give himself to the sway of right motives; we should. An analysis of his zeal shows it to be both selfish and boastful. He slew the house of Ahab which had dishonored God. True. But self-interest said, "If you are to take the throne of Ahab, you must kill every one of his heirs, or else they will inaugurate rebellion and dethrone you." He annihilated Baalism, the false religion which dishonored God's religion. True. But Baalism was the institution of Ahab, and self-interest said, "If you allow it to stand, its devotees will avenge your attack on Ahab." The worship

of the golden calves was God-dishonoring: why did not Jehu destroy that? The sin of Jeroboam insulted God and ignored his law as surely as did the sin of Ahab: why did not Jehu banish that from the land? Self stood in the way. He thought that if he destroyed the calf-worship, the people would go to Jerusalem to worship, and in the course of time the two kingdoms would be reunited, and he would be left without a throne. Apparently he was working for God, but really he was working for Jehu. There are many men like him. They use the subscription paper, the pulpit, the church, religion itself, for the glory of self. True zeal makes the glory of God its inspiration and its intention. Jehu's zeal was boastful. It published a programme. And Jehu said to Joadab, "Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord." His words do not have the right ring. They do not promise much to the experienced. Jehu accentuated the word "my" in such a way as to show God's indebtedness to Jehu. "*My* zeal for the Lord." How hard it is to keep down self. When Jesus was talking about his coming agony on Calvary his disciples were discussing who should be the greatest. Jehu was not a man who could dig cellars and lay foundations, but he was a man who delighted to lay cope-stones amid the shouts of the people. True zeal is not like his. It does not advertise itself. It does not let its right hand know what its left hand is doing. It believes in putting forward the work and not the worker. When Saul the Pharisee becomes Paul the Christian, he



buries the ego in him and crowns the Christ. His own words are, "It is no longer I that do it, but Christ who liveth in me."

(2.) *True zeal is characterized by the use of right instrumentalities.*

Jehu used deceit and treachery and cruelty. His commission did not warrant the use of these things. His zeal was not according to a knowledge of God's moralities. He was like King Olaf of Norway who persecuted the heathen, maiming bodies, burning homes, plundering property. He called robbers to his aid, requiring only that they be baptized in the name of Christ, and justified himself by saying, "I have the honor of God to defend." God does not authorize either deceit or cruelty in the execution of his decrees. He did not tell Jehu to have the heads of Ahab's descendants carted about the country in baskets. He did not tell Rebekah to dress Jacob up into a lying cheat in order to keep the blessing from going to Esau. The popular phrase, "The end justifies the means," was not coined in God's mint. God tells us distinctly that we must not do evil that good may come. In the cause of religion it is wrong to use false arguments or to make incorrect statements or to suggest or to appeal to base motives. The zeal that does so is not true. When the dying Scotchman asked his minister if the Lord would accept of him if he gave a thousand pounds to the church, the minister did wrong when, in his anxiety to secure money for the church, he replied, "It is weel worth the trying, mon." It was not worth

the trying. A man and his money will find no acceptance with God save as the man comes to God through the blood of Jesus Christ.

(3.) *True zeal is characterized by the completeness of its purpose.*

The zeal of Jehu did not have a complete purpose. A complete purpose would have required him to annihilate the worship of the golden calves as well as the worship of Baal. Because of the incompleteness of purpose his zeal was defective and false. In pronouncing upon a man's zeal we must look at what he builds up as well as what he pulls down. It takes very little genius to pull a house down; it takes more to put one up. Construction, and not destruction, is power. You may be a very bitter and keen and persistent critic of national reformers and temperance reformers, and yet be a very poor reformer yourself in these departments of God's work. Jehu's zeal should have built up the worship of Jehovah in Israel.

### III. AN EXHORTATION.

The study of this Scripture would not be complete if it did not include a practical exhortation. The exhortation which should be pressed is this: Living in the midst of zeal that is false, "seek enthusiasm and truth in your religious zeal."

There is a place in religion for men of the Simon Peter type. Such men with their zeal and enthusiasm are great powers when they are regulated. They have their occasions, and no one else can fill them. Who but Peter could preach Christ

on the day of Pentecost; or who but Peter could or would go to the house of Cornelius? The church needs human impulse married to divine guidance. Do you need reasons enforcing this exhortation? This is one reason, viz.: the non-enthusiastic never succeed in any great work. This is another reason: as followers of Christ we have to combat against the zeal of the wicked. Luther used to picture the zeal of the devil, against which we have to contend, in this way: He said Satan once held a council to hear reports from his emissaries. One demon reported, "I let loose the wild beasts on a whole caravan of Christian travellers, and their bones bleach in the desert."

"What of that!" cried the devil; "their souls were all saved."

Another demon reported, "I used the east wind against a shipload of missionaries, and they are in the depths of the sea."

"What of that!" cried the devil; "their souls were all saved."

Another demon reported, "I tried to put a single Christian to sleep, and it took ten years, full years of zeal and energy, but I succeeded at last and I left him fast asleep." At this the devil shouted, and every son of hell sang for joy.

This is another reason: zeal is explicitly enjoined. "It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing." God commended Phinehas for his zeal and Paul commended the Corinthians for their zeal. He said that it was admired by others,

and that it stirred them up to duty. Zeal is everywhere admired. Who, for example, does not admire the zeal of the Pilgrim fathers who came for the purposes of religious liberty to these shores of ours? Look at them as they see the "Mayflower" go back to the land whence they came. The ship is ready to return and has spread its sails. In groups the pilgrims, emaciated by famine and fever and decimated by savages and climate, stand about the beach watching it as it passes out of sight.

"Oh strong hearts and true! Not one went back in the  
'Mayflower;'

No; not one looked back who had set his hand to the  
ploughing."

Zeal is admired. It thrills men; therefore let us secure its influence in winning men to Christ and his cause.

From heaven Christ speaks to his church and says, "Be zealous." Rev. 3:19. "Be zealous;" this is the law for the service of God, whether it be carried forward upon earth or in heaven. Zeal and enthusiasm are things which we will take with us across the boundary line. They are eternal things. In heaven there are zeal and enthusiasm, burst of praise follows burst of praise and alleluia follows alleluia.



JONAH COMMISSIONED TO PREACH IN  
NINEVEH.

“ARISE, GO TO NINEVEH, THAT GREAT CITY, AND CRY AGAINST IT.” *Jonah 1:2.*

## PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS.

(1.) *What is the classification of the book of Jonah?*

It is classified with the books of prophecy. It seems strange that it should be. It has only one prediction in it, and that was not fulfilled. It prophesied that Nineveh should be destroyed in forty days, but it was not. How can the book be classified with prophecy? For the answer of this question we must go to Jesus Christ. He teaches the men of his day that Jonah was a type of Him, and that the wonderful miracle of Jonah's life was a symbol; that the facts in Jonah's experience, when he was plunged into the sea and delivered, contained in them a concealed prophecy of His three days' burial and His resurrection on the morning of the third day. This explanation gives grandeur and point and character to the little book, which otherwise seems fragmentary and broken and missionless. The book is a symbolical prophecy of the thrilling and grand in the coming Christ. (Luke 11:29, 30.) For this reason it can claim its place among the books of prophecy.

(2.) *Are the events recorded in the book real history?*

The question is raised because infidels have made themselves merry over the miracle which it contains, and rationalists have pronounced it un-historic. German critics treat it as a fiction, a myth, a legend. Some regard it as a dream. They say that the prophet Jonah dreamed in Gath-hepher, as Joseph dreamed when he was a lad in the fields with his brethren. No sheaves came round about the lad's sheaf; the sun and moon and stars made no obeisance to him. Others make it a historical allegory, or a parable, the meaning of which was well understood in his day. To my mind there is only one theory: The book is literal history. Every Bible reader knows a dream or a parable or an allegory when he comes upon such. They are plainly indicated. There is nothing to indicate that this book is not honest, straightforward history. The reasons we accept of it as history are: (a.) It was never questioned in the Jewish synagogue. (b.) The correctness of its geographical and historical allusions and statements. (c.) Christ treats it as true history. As a historical character he made no difference between Jonah and Abraham. He believed the whole story of Jonah just as we have it. Was Jesus mistaken in a whole series of alleged historical facts, thinking and saying that such and such things happened, when they were nothing more than fables or dreams? Or did he deliberately represent them to be history when he knew they were not? If so,

where is our foundation of trust in Christ? What ever touches Christ, his wisdom, his veracity, touches Christianity.

(3.) *Where did Jonah live?*

At Gath-hepher. (2 Kings 14:25.) This village was in the tribe of Zebulun, a few miles from Nazareth. Christ, who referred to Jonah, you see, lived in Nazareth near to Jonah's birthplace. This may have been planned of God for the purpose of giving the human mind of Christ a greater grip on Jonah's character and mission. Living in the place where the memories of Jonah lingered, he was in a place to learn of Jonah.

(4.) *What is the significance of the prophet's name?*

The name "Jonah" means "the dove." The dove is noted for its "mourning love." "Mourning love" is the characteristic of Jonah. His history, as recorded in this book, does not look like it, but this little book is only a page from his history, and gives the exception of his life and not its even tenor. This book was written by himself and for the glory of God, and the man is purposely exhibited in his worst light, that the contrast between him and God may exalt the merciful character of God. He does not think of himself. There is no rounding of hard angles, no careful explanation, and no softening of wrong things. God is everything, and the unloveliness of the man is made prominent to the glory of God. There is another scene recorded in the Old Testament in which Jonah's character appears as the true exponent of his name, "the dove-like."

## HISTORIC OUTLINE.

Jonah received a communication from God. God directed him to go to Nineveh, the capital of heathendom. He was sent to Nineveh to be an enlightening conscience unto and to cry against it. His words were to be terrible words, like a wind which rends the mountain, like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces. The iniquity of Nineveh is now full, and something startling must be used to rouse it to repentance, or else judgment will drive it out of existence. God sends it the startling cry of a prophet, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." The great crime of Nineveh, according to the prophecy of Nahum, was violence and oppression.

Jonah at first refused to carry out the divine commission. He fled from his prophet-presence before God. God said, Go east; but he went west. He took a ship to Tarshish. Why did Jonah refuse to go to Nineveh and proclaim the message of the Lord? Some say fear, others the length of the journey, others the difficulty of the task. None of these answers are correct. We must go to the words of Jonah himself for the answer, chapter 4:2. He refused to go to Nineveh lest the character of God should be compromised. He felt morally certain that Nineveh would be saved upon repenting. Then where would be the truthfulness of God who told him to cry, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed"? His faith in God had not brought his imagination and



reason into subjection, and when he took counsel of them, he forsook the first principle of religion, viz., subjection to the word of God.

The flight from duty was not a success. God met Jonah on the sea in the form of a storm. The sailors looked upon the storm as a judgment from heaven. They cast the lot to find the criminal with whom God was angry, and Jonah was taken. This led Jonah to confess, and to advise the seamen to cast him overboard as a culprit. There was an immense amount of the true man in Jonah, else he would not have given such advice. It was a generous thing to do, and the sailors felt it to be so. At first they refused to obey, and strove hard to row the ship to shore. It was only as a last resort that they cast the prophet into the deep.

Just here we meet with the wonderful miracle. God prepared a great fish, which swallowed Jonah and carried him to the shore and ejected him. Do I believe this miracle? Yes. I so firmly believe it that I do not attempt to explain it. A question has been raised at this point of the history: If Jonah be the writer of this book, how did he know the action of the crew after he had been thrown overboard? The question calls imagination into play and suggests probabilities. Would the ship be likely to continue its trip to Tarshish now that its cargo was in the bottom of the deep? Would it not go back to Joppa? Would the sea-monster which took charge of Jonah carry him away from Nineveh or carry him back? What if the first man whom the crew saw on the wharf, as

they steered their ship into Joppa, should be Jonah? What a time they would have talking over the storm! Such a meeting would give Jonah all the facts recorded here.

#### EMPHATIC POINTS.

(1.) *God's plan of salvation includes the Gentile world.*

Israel forgot this. They believed that it included only them. Only in times which produced such Psalms as the sixty-seventh did they recognize the rights of the Gentiles. The covenant of God with Abraham included the Gentiles. "In thy seed shall all the nations of the world be blessed;" the covenant made Israel the custodians of the things of grace only for a time, and that for the benefit of the Gentiles. When the fulness of time came, God intended the custodians to open the treasures and distribute them world-wide. God never intended that they should be localized; he always meant, "*Whosoever will, let him come.*" The book of Jonah is in the Old Testament like a flash of lightning, which reveals for a moment that which is seen continually in the noontide splendor of the gospel dispensation. It shows the out-reaching of God's mercy and the wide circle of the plan of redemption. The book of Jonah has a place in what is called "the development of religion," i. e., the unfolding of God's purposes. It is a miniature of the mission of Christ, "who was a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well "as the glory of his people Israel." It reveals Jehovah's moral government over all kingdoms.

(2.) *God uses one people that he may instruct and influence another.*

God saved Nineveh because he meant to reach Israel through it. By sending his prophet to the capital of heathendom he intended to rebuke and rouse and pique Israel. Suppose a father of wealth had children who refused to improve their advantages, sons who would not study or apply themselves to business openings, sons who persisted in being mere nobodies. Suppose that father, to show his sons their folly, picked up a street boy and gave him a son's advantages and made a scholar of him or a successful business man. Such a case would be an illustration of God's method here. He gave Nineveh the privileges of Israel for a time. He gave it Israel's prophet. He gave it Himself. Nineveh, upon whom Israel looked with contempt religiously, accepted and used the offered privileges, and this rebuked neglectful Israel. How often are we rebuked and instructed by those who are below us in advantages!

(3.) *God will chastise his own people.*

If Jonah had not been his prophet, God would not likely have followed him in the storm. See God in Jesus, how he treated Peter. The severest words which Jesus ever uttered were those which he uttered in correcting his fault, "*Get thee behind me, Satan.*" These were stronger words than those which he used to the Pharisees. Peter stood between him and the cross, by which only he could redeem the world. That is just what Satan did in

the temptation of the wilderness. So Christ saw Satan in Peter. His love for Peter led him to speak harsh words to him, for the elimination of everything that was Satan-like in him. Fatherly love compels God to rebuke and chasten for the faults of his children. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities." Amos 3:2. Divine chastisement is the blessed heritage of the people of God.

(4.) *God uses the world in making and in keeping his people true to himself.*

He used the ship captain in arousing Jonah. This is not the only instance recorded in the Scriptures of Gentile heathen reproving the errors of God's servant and uttering appropriate truth. Pharaoh rebuked Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, for his faithlessness and duplicity. Abimelech served Isaac in the same way. God often uses instruments which seem to us to be very unlikely. For example: it was not a minister of the gospel to whom John Bunyan owed his awakening, but a wicked woman, who rebuked him for his dreadful profanity. The thought that such a woman could be shocked at his wickedness startled him. God has separated us from the world; he has set it about us as a guard. He has made it an enemy watching and wishing for our halting, and ready to utter the sneer and raise the shout of triumph over our inconsistencies. That sneer or shout often helps us to see ourselves and drives us to God for grace for holy living.



(5.) *Fleeing from duty is unreasonable even in the eyes of the world.*

Believing and disobeying, like Jonah! Such conduct is indefensible upon any principle. The heathen, when they heard of Jonah's God and of Jonah's professed relation to God, thought his conduct in fleeing from duty inexplicable. All they could do was to ask him, "Why hast thou done this?" The question was a piercing one. It was an unanswerable reproof. The same question is addressed to us by the world whenever we are derelict in the Christian life. With such a God as we have, such a Saviour, such a glorious heaven in prospect, such a Holy Spirit to inhabit us, coldness, unbelief, positive disobedience are all unreasonable. The only reasonable things are strict obedience, whole-hearted devotion, and self-denying zeal.

(6.) *Like begets like.*

This is an admitted principle in nature. We expect wheat from wheat, thorns from thorns. This ought to be an admitted principle in the social and spiritual world. It reigns there. Jonah's nobleness reproduced itself in nobleness in the sailors. When he offered to sacrifice himself for them, they were willing to toil and sacrifice that they might save him. The principle gives us great hope. Christ's character will beget like character in us. It will reproduce itself. This principle gives us great hope in Christian work. Our faith and love, like seeds, will grow in other lives.

(7.) *We cannot do wrong without injuring others.*

No fact stands out more prominently than this in the opening of Jonah's history. This fact increases our sense of responsibility. It makes us feel that we cannot do as we please, either with our own persons or with what God has given us. See yonder precious freight in the depths of the sea! Look at yon empty ship! This destruction of property is traceable to the sin of Jonah. Our lives touch the lives of others just as Jonah's did. We are affecting the destiny of all with whom we deal. How many are the arguments which God has given us to prove that we should do right and only right! How strongly has he bound us to duty! Every friend is a chain, every human being is an argument.

#### SUGGESTED EXERCISES.

1. *Cultivate the disposition of seeing God in your lives.*

The modern meteorologist would not have seen God in the storm which overtook Jonah. He would have seen only impersonal law. He would have explained it by science. There are methods of obtaining truth other than the scientific. There are instruments other than the telescope and microscope. There are processes other than the chemical or the spectrum analysis. There are truths which cannot be seen or smelled—truths of history, of mental philosophy, and of spiritual experience. These teach us that the moral world has a governor, and that God's will is felt in all spheres.

God is in all nature. God is in all the events of our lives.

2. *Study the conflicts of others.*

When we study the prayer which Jonah offered for deliverance, we see how the experience of others helped him. His prayer was made up largely from the Psalms which were born of distress. When Jonah was in the depths of distress, and unfitted to think for himself, these came to his help. Out of the conflict of others he built up his prayer of faith which brought deliverance. God has put the wealth of life into the experience of others, and he means that we shall make it ours. If we make it ours, we may purchase many a deliverance from pain and distress and fatigue.

3. *Expect a blessing through every affliction.*

Jonah was made a new man by his affliction. Or, rather, affliction brought out the true man which was in him. The true man was sleeping; affliction awakened him. Affliction is likened by the Holy Spirit to a furnace in which the dross is burned out of the gold and the gold made as bright as a mirror. In affliction sin is burned out of the soul and it is made to shine in holiness. Affliction burned disobedience out of the soul of Jonah.

## EFFECT OF JONAH'S PREACHING.

"SO THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVED GOD."—*Jonah* 3:6.

## HISTORICAL POINTS.

THIS Scripture is the significant point of the second half of the history of the prophet Jonah. Like the first half it begins with a commission from God directing Jonah to Nineveh. God is persistent in the execution of his purposes. He has decreed that Nineveh shall be warned, and his decree must be executed. If Jonah will not act as the instrument of execution at the first bidding of God, God will chastise him for his disobedience and command him a second time. This second commission is significant. It shows that God's work of discipline is complete. Discipline is always a perfect work with God. He is as true to his own nature in it as he is in his other works. When he puts the gold in the furnace for purification he keeps it there until it is so pure that he can see his own image reflected. Jonah reflects God's will. He does what God bids him. This second commission shows therefore the effectiveness of the discipline to which God subjected him. It sets forth a second thing—the restoring grace of God. He will not let one sin destroy the usefulness of his servant. He re-commissions Jonah. He uses the reclaimed Noah to utter anew the blessings of the covenant. He inspires



the reclaimed David to write the penitential Psalms. He directs the penitent Peter to feed his lambs and to lead in apostolic work. Here he restores the disciplined Jonah to the work of a prophet.

No sooner was the second commission given to Jonah than he rendered prompt obedience. "He arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord." We should like to know how he reached Nineveh—his mode of travel, the route taken, his companions in travel. But upon these things the sacred record keeps silence. It tells us he reached Nineveh, and then proceeds to describe the way in which he delivered his message and its effect upon the doomed city.

In describing the way in which Jonah executed his commission, the history incidentally sets forth the greatness of Nineveh. Its greatness was one reason why it should be delivered from sin. It was a powerful centre of corruption. It gave sin an impulse throughout the whole empire. Its greatness is concisely put. It would take three days of hard travel to journey around it and one day to go straight through it. The modern excavation of this city verifies the description here given, and also proves the fulfilment of the prophecies of Nahum and Zephaniah with respect to it. Nineveh disentombed is to-day one of God's powerful witnesses. God has many others yet buried in the earth, and one by one these will rise from their graves as others have done before them, and they will speak on behalf of God and his inspired Book.

I believe that the spirit of exploration in Oriental lands is of God, and that he will guide those who seek the truth to those things of sacred memory and of sacred history which have been buried for some wise purpose of his. God when he buried these decreed for them a resurrection day.

When Jonah reached Nineveh he began his work at once. How graphically the scenes which ensue are depicted! We see the great city with its magnificent distances. We see a lone man walking along its streets. We hear him cry one shrill sentence, "*Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed!*" As he moves on again and again that cry rings loud and clear. The people are startled, for they say to one another, "This is the prophet of the great God. This is the man of wonderful experience who was thrown into the deep because he refused when first directed by the Lord to come and proclaim his message. How terrible his message! Only forty days are given us. We must either repent or meet our doom." Jonah's sermon was a short one and free from all equivocation, so that those who heard it both understood it and remembered it. It was repeated and discussed in every household before the day was over. Before another day had passed the whole city was in sackcloth and ashes and was penitent before God. The quick repentance of Nineveh shows us that what God has predicted for the future is not an impossibility with him, viz., "nations shall be born into the spiritual kingdom of his Son in a day." The sackcloth and ashes of the people were

the external expression of internal feeling. They spoke of a sense of danger on account of sin. They were a confession of guilt. They were an appeal to God's mercy.

The repentance of Nineveh was thorough. It included a turning away from sin and a turning unto God. When God looked down from heaven he saw that the people had given up their sins and were following the opposite virtues. This sight called forth his mercy, and he issued a decree of pardon and averted the threatened doom. This filled the city with songs of praise to Jehovah. Thus in that far-away day of the past we have a pictorial gospel before the fulness of time.

But what of Jonah after the delivery of his appalling message? After he had proclaimed the message of God he went out of the city and climbed an elevation and threw himself down to watch for results. He built himself a booth and dwelt there, we suppose, at least forty days. But no army marches against Nineveh, no pestilence depletes it, no fire from the skies smites it to ashes, no earthquake rends its foundation. It stands unharmed because God has accepted of its repentance and reformation. This was a great grief to Jonah and filled him with perplexity. He thought that God's truth had been compromised; he thought that his claims as a true prophet had been destroyed; he thought that the interests of his country had been imperilled, for the kingdom which had been saved had long been considered the enemy of Israel. Oppressed by these black pic-

tures which his imagination had painted, he asked God to take away his life.

Just here we are introduced to the tenderness of God. He takes cognizance of the moods and feelings and errors of Jonah and mercifully corrects them and patiently deals with his pettishness. He deals with him verbally and symbolically. He starts him thinking in the right direction by means of questions, and then by means of the gourd, over the untimely destruction of which Jonah mourns, he vindicates the divine conduct towards Nineveh and shows that it is analogous to that which is highest and best in Jonah's better and spiritual nature.

The book closes abruptly. It closes with God's question ringing in Jonah's ears. While it closes abruptly, it gives us all the information we need. It leaves God and Jonah before us in a favorable light. God is vindicated, and Jonah is bowing in acquiescence before the glorious character of God.

#### DEDUCTIONS.

1. *Faith is an operative force and should be carefully cultivated.*

Faith was the spring of action in the reformation of Nineveh. It is said, "So the people of Nineveh believed God and proclaimed a fast." Their faith made the truth a power. Thus it always is. Here are two men with the one Bible open before them. The one is so moved by the truth that he renounces sin and aims at a higher and truer life. Both time and eternity are great



realities to him because of what the Book tells him. The other is unmoved. Time and eternity are mere fictions to him. Why the difference? One believes God, but the other does not. To one the Book is God's Book, and every word in it is as true as his own existence. To the other the Book is only a collection from mythology. What we need most of all is faith.

Faith works in different ways. It works according to the nature of that which it believes. For example, when faith looks to the love of God, it works by love. "We love him because he first loved us." When it looks to the infinite wrath of God, it works by fear, and "we flee for refuge to the hope set before us." When it looks at the agony of Christ bearing the cross, it works by grief. "We look to him whom we have pierced, and mourn." The faith of the Ninevites worked by fear. It saw the destruction that was at the end of forty days. Let us bring to our faith that by which we want it to work. Let us bring to it the things which are calculated to build it up in the noblest characteristics. We can feed our faith just as we feed our brain and our body. Hence we are responsible for the character and strength of our faith.

2. *Our past experience is not lost.*

The history of Jonah proves that our past experience is both helpful to ourselves and to others.

(a.) *Jonah's experience was helpful to himself.* It was educational. I remember hearing a father in the ministry, who is noted for his quaint way of

putting things, compare Jonah's education with Paul's. He said Paul was educated at Jerusalem Seminary, in the midst of refinement, at the feet of Dr. Gamaliel. But Jonah was educated at Whale Theological Seminary. The accommodations were not of the most refined order, but the instruction was very practical and forcible, for God himself was the Professor. Jonah learned some very important doctrines in the deep—doctrines which ought to bear directly upon human life and make it grand and noble. He learned there the great doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty. He learned there the doctrine of free grace. He gave utterance to both of these doctrines when he said, "Salvation is of the Lord." Jonah came forth from his wonderful and strange experience a better educated man. His theology was more emphatic and more to God's mind. His faith was clearer, his gratitude stronger, and his humility deeper.

(b.) *Jonah's experience was helpful to others.* By it God held up telling facts before Nineveh. These made his message impressive. Jonah's experience exhibited four of God's attributes. It lifted up his omniscience. Jonah tried to flee from his presence, but God laid his omniscient hand upon him in the waters of the ocean. He virtually said to him, "I dwell here; you cannot flee from my presence." It lifted up his justice. He severely chastised his disobedient, self-willed prophet. If he spared not his own servant, the men of Nineveh would see that his nature would

not permit him to allow them to escape. It lifted up his omnipotence. God called out the great forces of nature in inflicting chastisement upon his prophet. He threw the ocean into a terrific storm ; then he put forth his omnipotent hand and pressed its mountain billows into a dead level. It lifted up his infinite mercy. God heard the cry of his prophet and saved him, and wrought a miracle to save him. He accepted of his repentance and turned away deserved wrath. Now the display of these attributes of God before the men of Nineveh gave the message of Jonah great force and led the wicked city to repentance. I imagine you ask, But what authority have you for teaching that the Ninevites knew the experience of Jonah? Christ is our authority. He says "*Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites.*" He virtually says, "Jonah's wonderful experience, with its exhibit of divine authority, was put back of his short, crisp sermon, and this is what made it a converting power in Nineveh." God allows no experience of his people to be lost. It is all made subservient to the good of self or of others.

3. *If sinners are to be converted, God's messengers must deliver God's own words.*

God said unto Jonah, "Preach the preaching that I bid thee." He obeyed God, and it was the simple word of God that moved the great city. When we can put before our message this prefix, "Thus saith the Lord," we may expect it to strike the consciences of men and move them to duty. Oh, for more faith in the Word of God! Oh, for

the confidence in the Word which God has! When we give it the confidence which it deserves, we shall substitute it in the place of our own vagaries and theories and prejudices. The more we preach the Word, the more conversions will there be.

4. *The representations of God in the Bible are just what they ought to be, and do not conflict when kept in their places.*

When God saw Nineveh in sackcloth and ashes, it is said, "he repented." Some who read the Word of God solely with the intellect, and not at all with the heart, have raised a theological dispute here. They ask, Is not this change in God contradictory to what is said of God elsewhere in the Bible? Elsewhere it is written, "He is of one mind and who can turn him?" "I am Jehovah, I change not." I find no difficulty with passages like these, or with other passages which seem contradictory. Why? Because I take these passages just where I find them, and interpret them according to the use which the Holy Spirit intends to make of them. Now the Holy Spirit does not put one Scripture in conflict with another; neither should we. The Holy Spirit has placed every saying in the Bible precisely where it ought to be placed. The trouble is, theologians take these out of their places, and arrange them into orders and lines and plans according to their own mind, and the inevitable result is conflict. The Lord be praised that such is the result. The placing of the truths and facts of the Word is an essential and



important thing. An illustration will serve us here. A few years ago artists competed with one another in painting a portrait of the Czar of Russia. When the judges met to decide what pictures should be admitted to competition, they unceremoniously rejected a certain picture. They claimed that it carried rejection on its face. The artist demanded the exercise of his rights before submitting to its rejection. He claimed the right of placing his painting, because the place which it was to occupy was part of his design. He put it at a studied distance from the spectators, and it won the admiration of all and secured the prize. The placing of each truth in the Bible is part of God's plan in giving his revelations to man. We are guilty of wresting the Scriptures when we take truths out of their God-appointed places. I do not feel bound to reconcile texts which clash when taken from their places and pitted against one another. I put them back in their places, and they are thoroughly peaceful. I take them one at a time, and I find that they speak the right thing in the right place. When God says that he will destroy Nineveh in forty days, that is the right thing to say. Nineveh deserved to be destroyed. When God says he has repented and will therefore spare Nineveh, that is the right thing to say, for a different Nineveh is before him.

#### DUTIES.

##### 1. *Cry against sin.*

God means his people to be a conscience for

the men of the world. Every act of theirs should be a light among the deeds of men revealing the contrasts of evil. Their whole life should be one protest against wickedness. If there were more crying against sin, there would be more to feel their sin; there would be more Ninevehs converted.

2. *Do not carry any unnecessary burdens.*

Jonah's burden was an unnecessary burden; yet it was intolerable for its weight. It was God's burden that he was attempting to carry. He took upon him God's responsibility. We are like Jonah in a measure. We go into the future and borrow trouble. We worry over the providence of God. We exercise ourselves about results, while God commands us to exercise ourselves only about duty and leave results with him.

3. *Do not make Nineveh a witness against you.*

If we do not equal it in the readiness with which we improve our privileges and opportunities, it will condemn us in the judgment. Christ says so; and Christ is the judge before whom all men must stand.

## ISRAEL OFTEN REPROVED.

"HE THAT BEING OFTEN REPROVED HARDENETH HIS NECK, SHALL  
SUDDENLY BE DESTROYED, AND THAT WITHOUT REMEDY."—  
*Prov. 29:1.*

AMOS was a prophet of the country, was so by nature, and in this respect in marked contrast with Joel, who was a prophet of the city. Not that living in the country made Amos such: his home was only twelve miles south of Jerusalem and the tops of Olivet were always visible. Circumstances cannot create a genius, but they may preserve and mature it, and this the surroundings did for the prophet of Tekoa. Of his manner of life before his call to prophesy, beyond what we can imagine from his occupation, we know nothing; nor of the causes, if any secondary causes there were, that induced him to cross the border and testify against the northern kingdom. He was "one of the herdmen," probably a keeper of flocks not his own, and he was a "gatherer of sycamore fruit," a kind of food used only by the poorest of the people. He was therefore a man of the lowest rank, and an example of the freeness of the grace that called to the prophetic office. But though from humble station, he was a man of fine genius and by no means ignorant. He shows great familiarity with the Pentateuch and quotes verbally Joel his predecessor in the prophetic office. He also has a broadness of view incon-

sistent with mental poverty. An example of this is the wide view he takes of a universal providence, there being neither with him nor with the other Old Testament prophets, notwithstanding the common belief to the contrary, anything of narrow particularism and Jewishness.

What was the prophet's history subsequent to his appearing at Bethel we are not told. It can hardly be supposed that having fulfilled his prophetic office, he returned again to his flocks. And there may be truth in the tradition that he crossed his own border only to die. There is a legend, ill-authenticated it is true, that Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, went the length of violence to stop the prophet's mouth, and that the priest's son drove a nail through his temples, or struck him on the temple with a club, and that he had strength left only to reach home and to die. But all this is little probable.

The time of his prophecy is full of interest. The northern kingdom reached its highest splendor under the second Jeroboam. His long reign of forty years gave his great talents scope and afforded time for his enterprises to consolidate. Along with great energy and courage he had also self-control. It is said that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord;" but men of great talents are not usually altogether destitute of reverence for the truth, and, whatever his motives were, he does not seem to have allowed himself to be drawn by the outcries of his priest at Bethel to take any measures against Amos. He can hardly have thought



the matter too light a thing to attend to, for it concerned the constitution of the country. The schism of the north did not originate in a religious divergence, but a difference of religion entered into the essence of its constitution; and if this difference had disappeared, the political schism might have come to an end. It was always part of the policy of these northern kings who were wise enough, and not too wicked to have any policy, to work the religious element of the constitution. They prohibited pilgrimages to Jerusalem and established a splendid cultus of their own.

The precise nature of the religion of the northern kingdom is sometimes misunderstood. It was not of course pure worship of Jehovah, but it was not sheer idolatry. It was the worship of Jehovah under sensuous forms. They did not adore the calf; they adored Jehovah under the symbol of a calf; much probably as Roman-catholics of Italy and Spain, if not other countries, worship Christ under the symbols of the babe or the crucifix. But this fact that the worship of the north was only a corrupt worship of Jehovah explains how Israel was still held part of the nation and visited by prophets and spoken to by God. They were the "nominal Christians" of the day. It also explains how the nation for a long time thrived under this calf-worship, and how, though such prophets as Amos and Hosea denounced it, they did not altogether break with the nation nor carry on that war of extermination against it which Elijah waged against the worship of Baal of his day.

The latter was pure idolatry and a foreign importation; the calf-worship was but a corruption of the true religion, and was of native growth. And we can imagine, from the example of corrupt churches of our own time, how much real virtue and true piety there may have been in individuals along with all its corruptions in the northern kingdom. Although religious opinions be the food upon which religious life is supported, the latter has, like the natural life, the power of assimilating the true and rejecting what is hurtful. We have all perhaps met with Roman-catholics on whom the corrupt doctrines of their church seemed to have exerted but little deteriorating influence, who had the root of the matter in them and brought forth good fruit in speech and behavior. Corruptions that grow up in the native soil of a people are generally connected with forms of truth that modify their influence. In process of time, of course, the evil did overmaster and extinguish the counteracting good, as is its manner, and gradually society became too corrupt to hold together. And the lesson read to churches and nations by this history of the northern kingdom is even more to be pondered when it is seen how political annihilation so surely followed what was but a corruption of the true worship of God.

There are not wanting illustrations of this truth in later years. The political bondage of the early Christian nations of the East to whom we send our missionaries, the constant political unrest and ever-changing geography of some of the States

of Central and South America, where a corrupt religion was forced upon an idolatrous people and made still more corrupt by the mixture, are examples, and we may believe that like results would have followed in Southern Europe but for the support given to those States by neighboring nations.

The speculative tendencies of modern philosophy are also tempting men to a breach of the First Commandment quite as effectually as did the "high places" and "pleasant groves" of Israel. Indeed there probably has never been an age in which so many have worshipped gods of their own making as in this conceited nineteenth century, and that too with no higher wisdom than was manifested by the framers of golden calves. We can even analyze the manufacture of these philosophic divinities, and discover what elements men have chosen in the composition of their deity and what they have rejected. The characteristics ascribed to these gods are found to be exact indices of the taste and education of their devotees, and not unfrequently also of the *place* of their education. As there were gods of the Philistines and gods of the Zidonians and gods of the Egyptians, between which the affections of the Israelites oscillated, so now there are German species with American and English varieties.

On the other hand we sometimes find American self-reliance and independence manifested in this work of idol-making. Some half-fledged theologian, some "progressive" Christian, carry-

ing the spirit of "Young America" into his faith, fashions his deity to suit himself—this or that trait in the God of the Bible is not to his liking, and therefore he makes his own god. This school of idol-makers is well represented by Bunyan's Mr. Anything. "Men," say they, "do not worship each a different and therefore false god, because they *intend* only one and true God. He did not make men to differ in every conceivable respect, and not allow them variety in theology as well." Such are the sentiments of these "liberalists." Such heterogeneous vagaries, the work of men's minds, are no better divinities than the idols made with hands. Against these, no less than the outward representations of divinity, is addressed the command "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Was this spoken to the Jews only? Wherein is a god the work of men's minds any less real than the work of men's hands?

Let us now return to the state of the northern kingdom when Amos addressed to it the words of Jehovah. The time was one of great outward prosperity. The arms of Jeroboam had been successful everywhere, and the old enemies of Israel had been, as it seemed, finally defeated and the old boundaries of the kingdom permanently restored. Peace reigned, and with peace security. Distant rumors of a mighty and active power operating on the Euphrates, and threatening to come into collision on the east with Syria, were too vague to cause alarm in the fortress of Samaria. Men were at ease in Zion. The country,



too, was very religious. Jeroboam I. had, as a matter of policy, set up an altar at Bethel to prevent communication with Jerusalem, and then, as a matter of faith, given to some extent the worship of Jehovah a visible object. For convenience' sake, or under a feeling of reverence for the spots made sacred by the history of the patriarchs, particularly where God had visited them, altars were set up at Gilgal for the tribes by the Jordan, and at Beersheba for dependents lying in the south. Like tendencies of corrupt faith we notice in more modern days in the multiplication of sacred places and objects, and in the erection of shrines upon spots which Christ or his apostles are known or are thought to have hallowed by their presence.

Amos tells us that this worship was very sedulously carried on; and, what is very interesting, we learn, from the enumeration of customs he gives us, that the Mosaic ritual was to a large extent in use in the northern kingdom, though of course perverted. The kingdom was still part of the nation, still had its faith, still worshipped the God of Israel, still was visited by the prophets of God from Judæa, and still existed under the miraculous tutelage of God, its theocratic ruler. The worship of the Lord, at the places stated, was very regular and with much outward impressiveness and eagerness on the part of the worshippers. Men were ready with free-will offerings in addition to what the law required. Amos ironically invites the people to new urgency in their wor-

ship: "Come to Bethel and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God." (4:4, 5.) And then with sudden transition he holds up before them what they gain by it all, and what the Lord's action is on his side: "And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." (4:6.) The stated feasts were kept regularly. The Lord says, "I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies." (5:21.) The worship, as at Jerusalem, was accompanied with sacred music: "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols." (5:23.) Everything was done to make the service similar to that at Jerusalem, and this may not have been altogether policy; but some pious hands helped to rear these altars and some devout hearts worshipped before them. Religious men sometimes suffer restraint from political exigencies. But they are not all bad men who are members of an impure church, and much true work of God has been done in churches corrupted by political or ecclesiastical interference.

History again repeats itself. The increase of corruption is always accompanied by an excess of religiousness. The Pharisees of our Lord's time

made void the commandments of God by their traditions, and multiplied observances. They tithed mint and anise and cummin, made broad their phylacteries, and performed their religious acts with ostentatious publicity. The history of the corrupt Greek and Latin churches adds further illustration. The two sacraments of the Word have become seven and the simplicity of their observance has been changed into a pompous ritual. The sacred days have been multiplied, and more honor is paid to these human institutions than to the divinely appointed ordinances. Indeed by human interpretations and additions there is nothing connected with the worship of God which has not been changed to minister to the pride and vanity of the heart of man.

The sure progress of all this is towards dissolution. In the midst of its most splendid prosperity Israel was declining. Its prosperity helped towards its decline because the luxuriousness common to such a state advanced unchecked by any high morality. Amos constantly harps upon their "palaces;" he sneers at their effeminacy in lying "on the ends of couches and on damask beds" (3:12), "that lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves on couches" (6:4), and threatens with ruin "their winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish" (3:15).

But the boundary between luxury and sensuality is never well defined, and the last was already too visible where it is most offensive—among the women of the country, whom Amos describes as

"cows of Bashan," full-fed, wanton, saying to their lords, "Bring and let us drink." That licentiousness continued to prevail in Samaria until our Lord's time we cannot doubt with the story of the woman of Samaria before us, and the name of the town he visited suggests a kindred vice emphasized by Amos, the vice of drunkenness. Andrews and Stanley both say the name was changed from Sichem to Sychar, the toper city, in allusion to the drunkenness of the inhabitants. Naturally we recall the words of Isaiah, "Woe to the crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine."

It is a law traced with awful distinctness by Paul in the first chapter of Romans that ungodliness is the fountain of all evils; that men first corrupt the idea of God, and then pass down towards complete debasing of themselves and then further to such enmity and strife that in their feebleness from vice the bonds of society can no longer hold it together. This law is very visible in the history of the northern kingdom. The sins which Amos reproves are, first, this corrupt worship of God, then sensual corruption, and then, lastly, there was such social oppression and deceit and war of class against class that it scarcely needed a prophet to see that the nation must speedily break up.

It becomes an interesting and important question how the real state of society in Israel com-



pared with our own social condition. There can be no doubt that the vices stigmatized by Amos prevail among ourselves and that sermons equally severe could be preached to us. Was the state of society in Samaria worse than it is in some modern capitals? The absence of law in the East made oppression much easier than with us, but otherwise, perhaps, Samaria fell from a state of things not greatly more gross than prevails in portions of our great cities. The upper classes were, in Amos' days, becoming wholly irreligious. This irreligiousness showed itself in various ways; for example, in an overmastering devotion to trade and great frauds in the prosecution of it, "saying, when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit." (8:5.) Of course the usual adulteration of what was sold to the helpless poor followed, "selling the refuse of the grain." Even in a more decided way the spirit of ungodliness came out in the shape of bold and contemptuous impiety, in turning to the uses of revelry the sacred vessels: "They lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god." (2:8.) But they had even gone farther. They were not only driven by evil passions, but they became calculating in their wickedness. They went about beforehand to remove obstacles to their end. They sought to suppress the grace of God when it was a reproof to them: "Ye gave

the Nazarites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not." (2: 12.)

Greed of gain, luxuriousness, bitter oppression to the poor, irreverence that sinned openly even in the holy places, ungodliness that would, if possible, befool the grace of God—these were the vices of men in this time. Are they not the crying sins of our own time? Surely an Amos would not be without an occupation in this nineteenth century, and the much-despised Old Testament still furnishes instructions and warnings as appropriate as if to-day uttered by the prophet at the command of God in the streets of many a metropolis.

Thus this stern solitary shepherd from the south was the man chosen of God to denounce sins and foreshadow his certain judgments upon them. No fitter instrument could be found. The disease needed a desperate remedy, if, indeed, any remedy could be found. And his early training and his love of nature furnished him with powerful figures in fulfilling his mission. And Jehovah shall press down Israel "as a wagon full of sheaves presses what is under it," a graphic figure of crushing calamity. And the remnant of Israel shall be "as when a shepherd saves from the mouth of a lion two feet or a piece of an ear"—all else devoured. And to the oracular sentence borrowed from Joel, "The Lord shall roar out of Zion," he adds his own observation, "Will the lion roar except he have caught a prey?" And with these bare, sharp doctrines he set out to preach to the sinful nation; and the texts he uses are these: "The Lord shall

roar out of Zion," and "Prepare to meet thy God!" but adding a great promise to all his denunciations, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins; and I will build it as in the days of old." (9: 11.)

## ISRAEL'S OVERTHROW FORETOLD.

"WHOSOEVER HATH NOT, FROM HIM SHALL BE TAKEN EVEN THAT WHICH HE SEEMETH TO HAVE."—*Luke 8:18.*

THE golden text associated with the passage of Scripture before us furnishes a suitable starting-point for our thoughts. It is one of the proverbs of the kingdom. We have not time to trace its meaning and value in the natural history of man, but must follow it as it rises to his spiritual history, and even here must confine ourselves largely to the latter part of the law as announced. And here we have great need to keep in mind that distinction to which the words of our Lord expressly call our attention, namely, that which exists between the having and the seeming to have. One even trembles to think what is the amount of this apparent but unreal possession of the things of Christ. With what facility, under the influence of circumstances or from contact with others, do people adopt what they call their views and opinions! They find everything ready to their hand by the labor and experiences, the conflicts and controversies of those who went before them; and that which in the possession of others might have represented a whole history of mental toil and fervent affections, may in their case represent only the outward influences by which their form of opinion was determined, or the party predilections which invest it for them with a fictitious value.



We see at a glance how different is the reality of possession in the one case and in the other, though the same words are repeated and the same doctrines held. Numberless are the degrees and indefinable the shades of this difference as we pass from the fullest "having" to the merest "seeming to have." The remembrance of this is all that is necessary in order to convert many apparent exceptions to our proverb into its most genuine and conspicuous examples.

The practical use of such a proverb scarcely needs to be suggested. How plainly does it teach us to meet every method of divine teaching and every opportunity of divine gifts with the best we can bring. More strongly still does it admonish us to look to the reality of our apparent possessions, to see that they do not lie on the surface of our existence as things external to our real selves, but that they are taken down deeply into our hearts and wrought into our lives, apprehended by experience and tested by use. Use indeed does more than test; it confirms, it realizes possession. That knowledge of Christ, that strength of the spirit, those special gifts which we are using for the good of others or for the purposes and the glory of the Lord, we are at the same time making more truly our own than they were before; while the talent laid up in a napkin, the money buried in the earth, scarcely seems to be his who treats it as if he had it not.

In what has been said we have dwelt upon the saying with special reference to the first occasion

of its use (Matt. 13:12; Mark 4:25; Luke 8:18), where it stands before us as a law of the continuous government of the kingdom of God; yet we should not fail to remember its later use in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:29), and in that of the pounds (Luke 19:26), where it is announced as a principle of the final judgment in which that government is consummated. On this latter application of the proverb it would not be easy to expatiate. Enough that it turns the law, which was silently and progressively executed before, into a public, a sudden, and an irreversible sentence. Enough that it declares the total and final removal of neglected gifts from those whose time for their possible employment is now concluded, and at the same time the continuance and augmentation of all spiritual attainments to those who now enter on larger scenes of activity and to serve before the Lord for ever.

In all history there is no more striking illustration of the workings of this law than is to be found in the history of the northern kingdom. How wonderfully they had been blessed of God, what a wealth of talents was committed to their keeping! The Lord chose them a special people. They were Israelites, to whom pertained "the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises." These blessings they had and yet they had them not; neither prizing nor using them, they lost that which they seemed to have. They received these advantages as an inheritance from

their fathers, but they were never so wrought into their lives as to become a part of their experience, and so they lost their inheritance. And now the same law becomes a principle of final judgment, and the prophet is sent to foretell their doom in the complete and final overthrow of their nation.

This sad result of their apostasy may be viewed in various lights, all of which are replete with warning and instruction. Notwithstanding numerous kindnesses, distinguished privileges, and long forbearance with their iniquities, Israel had affronted God, broken their covenants with him, given themselves to a worship continually more corrupt and idolatrous, and yet still they expected God's favor. It was in view of the inevitable result of this estrangement that Amos put to Israel the unanswered question, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" When the Bible gives these unanswered questions, it intends that each hearer shall sit down and, by the analogy of faith applied to his own experience, or the reverent searching of the Scriptures, work out an answer for himself. And the answer to this question is of eternal significance.

There is a disagreement between God's law and man's conscience. God's law is his manifested will for the regulation of his creatures, the rule of life. It is the very reflection of his holiness cast down from heaven. Like himself it is holy, just, and good. It is as perfect as its author, and cannot be otherwise unless God himself change. Therefore it knows of no compromise.

It cannot bend by a hair's breadth to keep a whole world of human beings from sinking into everlasting perdition. The ocean is under law to God, and by that law it would engulf the whole human race without swerving from its even course, if that race were cast upon it for protection. This is God's law, and his laws are all sure. They are not yea, yea, and nay, nay. His moral law ruling spirits is as inexorable as his physical law ruling matter. It knows of no yielding and no compunction. The ocean would submerge a million of men, and the next moment its waves would roll and play on in the same regular succession as before. There would be no staggering of resolution and no change of purpose. He who made the sea may miraculously walk its waves and stretch out his hand to the perishing, but the sea's law is pitiless. Such also is God's law for moral beings. His law denouncing sin and demanding holiness has no yielding, no mercy for our indulged sins, our corrupt heart. It meets us like the ocean: "the soul that sinneth it shall die." It never changes, it never repents. The law never saved a sinner. If it did it would no longer be law. If it yields at any one point it is absolutely annulled. It is so with human law, it must be so with the divine law.

Let us now turn to man. The conscience is that part of man which perceives right or wrong in actions, approves or disapproves of them, and anticipates their consequences under the moral administration of God. It therefore comes into



closest contact with God's law. They touch at all points, neither the one nor the other being able to avoid the contact. Certainly there is need of peace in so close a union, but there is no peace. The first exclamation of an awakened conscience on the discovery of the law is, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy!" "The commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The law's enmity against a guilty moral being is intense and total; it cannot be otherwise. The enmity of a guilty moral being against the holy law that condemns him is intense and total, and it cannot be otherwise.

And now what is the effect of this disagreement? They cannot walk together. Enmity tends to separation and separation to distance. The law indeed remains where it was and what it was. The conscience unreconciled pushes itself away into ever-growing indifference, and dreading the contact of a condemning law, is glad of the comparative relief. Now when we add to this not only what the law has said, but also what it will do, that it will appear as witness and accuser, it needs no Amos to foretell the final overthrow, the sad and inevitable doom of every enemy of God.

We are not to forget the other side. As the prophets of old mingled the tenderness of God's love with his denunciations of sin, as they besought while they warned, entreated while they condemned, so the law and the gospel ever go together in the full presentation of the truth. Christ is our peace, making both one. The distance is the sin-

ner's act; he is his own destroyer; for "God was in Christ *reconciling* the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: and hath committed unto us the word of *reconciliation*. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye *reconciled* to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:19-21.) Nevertheless the lesson from the prophecy of Amos remains in all its terrible-ness that "two cannot walk together except they be agreed;" and this separation of sin persisted in must result in the destruction of the sinner. "It is hard to kick against the pricks."

Or the teaching of this portion of Scripture may be regarded in another light, affording illustration of the truth of another weighty sentence that fell from the Saviour's lips: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Luke 16:13.) It was the attempt at this impossible double service that proved the ruin of Israel. Like the mixed race with which the king of Assyria peopled Samaria after the captivity of Israel, and to whom he sent a captive priest to teach them how they should fear the Lord, "they feared the Lord and served their own gods" (2 Kings 17:33), and this corrupt religion, this union of the true worship and idolatry, brought about its inevitable result if persisted in.

In the great conflict of time, beginning with the Fall and ending with Christ's second coming, there are only two antagonistic principles, two high contending powers. Whatever may be the shade or the shape of subordinate combatants in particular parts of the broad battlefield, they are merely varieties of good and evil, of holiness and sin. The divine Chief who rules supreme in the hosts of the holy has himself given a short and simple test to determine any one's side—"He that is not with me is against me." All that remains at enmity against God must be registered on one side, whatever may be the specific varieties of evil. Whether it go by the name of mammon or the devil or the world or the flesh, it serves one master and wins one wage.

True religion is therefore exclusive. It not merely calls men to believe in itself, but to reject every other faith. It not merely claims to be right and true, but it boldly says that every other faith is wrong and false. The God of the Bible not merely commands us to worship *him*; he commands us to worship no one else. His very first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." In short the great characteristic of Christianity, as well as of Judaism, is that it is an exclusive religion. Christianity is a faith which admits of no rivals, no competitors; it demands to stand alone. The men of Athens might believe that there were other gods than theirs in Rome, but the true God is not the God of this land or that land; he is the God of all the earth.

We see, therefore, the inconsistency, the folly, the self-contradiction, the sin of the course pursued by Jeroboam I. and his successors and the people of the northern kingdom. And we see the folly and sin of those in our days who vainly strive to unite the service of God and mammon, the men or women who "fear the Lord" and at the same time think to "serve their own gods"—wealth, pleasure, fashion, or ambition. Not that this view should be pushed to any fanatical extreme. Not that Christianity requires of us to set no value upon earthly good or to refuse to give to those we love any affection at all. That is asceticism, monasticism; it is not Christianity. What Christianity requires is that God should be supreme in the heart, that nothing else should ever be put on a level with him, that he should reign in the soul as he does in the universe, *alone*, with all things else at an immeasurable distance beneath his feet—in a word, that he should be Master.

And the result of this inconsistent worship, this double service, is a constant decline to the fall. So was it with Israel. Ever waning religion, ever increasing idolatry; a service of God and acknowledgment of him from the dreaded ill of his judgments, and a more hearty service of their own gods until Ephraim was joined to his idols and the command went forth, "Let him alone." So if men seek to combine the worship of God and mammon they will soon find that any worship they give to the true God is the child of fear, and that this worship in growing degree is chilly and heartless when



compared with the service of their worldly idol. They know quite well that if they were free to act as inclination led them they would openly give their worship where they have already given their heart. It is a fact about which there can be no doubt that if a man tries to worship God and mammon together, mammon will always have the advantage, mammon will always have the preëminence and the chief share of service; and in the long run their own gods will get all their service and the Lord Jesus Christ will get none.

## SIN THE CAUSE OF SORROW.

"YOUR INIQUITIES HAVE SEPARATED BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR  
GOD." *Isa.* 59:2.

"HE walked in the ways of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." "Howbeit, from the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, he departed not." "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." "For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the Lord, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin." "For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities." So ringing the changes on "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin," runs the guilty history of successive kings of Israel. Like ruler, like people; and the ten tribes, following the leadership of their rulers, apostatized from God and turned to the calves with idolatrous worship. Judgment succeeded judgment. One trouble after another followed in quick succession, and the land had no rest. The nation sank beneath the weight of its idolatry, their iniquities separated between them and their God, until the kingdom was rent asunder. Though they have

been sought for north and south and east and west, all the wide world over, no proved remnant of the ten tribes is to be found on the earth. Driven into captivity, their land bare and desolate, over the broken remains of their cities and the moss-covered shrines of their idolatrous worship might be heard the word of God by his prophet Hosea, "Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off." (Hosea 8:5.)

Sooner or later iniquity brings sorrow and sudden destruction. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." (Gal. 6:7, 8.) This is the truth that comes to us from the history we have been studying. The man to whom the lesson is applicable now-a-days is the man who moulds his life and character, his spirit and conscience, not by the high ideals of God and heaven, but by the objects and pursuits of the world, by things that are lower than his own nature. And this worldly conformity leads speedily, in most instances, to a low moral standard and to a weak and corrupt form of religion, and produces the same sad and humiliating results which flowed from the idolatry of ancient times. Even as they do not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gives them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient. They are without God, therefore, necessarily, without hope in the world. The burdens, cares, and toils, the constant changing of plans and places, the perpetual

irritations, the fits of anger, envy, jealousy, and remorse, the many carking anxieties, the vanity and vexation of spirit which disturb and distract their lives—oh, what bitter lamentations are heard from these poor idolaters who pursue wealth, fame, pleasure, fashion ! They wonder at the meanness and destitution of life ; they fret and fume at the dispensations of Providence ; renewed pursuit succeeds deplored deception ; however well they get on, they are never satisfied, confessing all the time that they fail even when in form they succeed, and showing by their symptoms of disappointment and dissatisfaction that their objects, whether gained or lost, have no relation to their wants. They spend money for that which is not bread and labor for that which satisfieth not. And sooner or later their sin becomes their punishment, their idols their scourges. Their calves have cast them off.

The sentiment is true of those people who put riches in the place of God. The love of money is the aberration of a nature that was made for God and is still unconsciously seeking after him. Mammon-worship is the semblance or counterfeit of God-worship. It presents some faint features of resemblance to him. It seems omnipotent, able to do all things ; omnipresent, showing signs of itself everywhere ; beneficent, supplying our present wants, providing for our future, procuring for us an endless variety of blessings, and giving us almost all that our hearts can desire ; and because it presents these superficial resemblances to God,



because it thus mimics his infinitude, it becomes a religion to many, a worship loud in praise and aspiration as any that ever filled a church. Money, no doubt, has power, but power that has a well-defined limit. Money will buy plenty, but not peace; it will furnish your table with luxuries, but not with the appetite to enjoy them; it will surround your sick-bed with physicians, but not restore health to your enfeebled body; it will encompass you with a crowd of flatterers and bring you the attention of obsequious servants, but never procure for you one true friend; it will pay some debts, but not one, not the least of your debts to the law of God; it will last it may be for time, but is not carried into eternity. And when, as is often seen even in this life, riches take to themselves wings and fly away, or in that hour when the summons comes, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," this voice also seems to come sounding from the throne of God, "Thy calf has cast thee off."

The same thought may be applied to those whose idol god is pleasure in any of its many forms—fashion, excitement, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, or the pleasures of sin in grosser forms. What is this idolatry but the soul, in its restless pursuit of happiness, mistaking the true object of which it is in quest? God made man upright, seeking his portion and fruition in Him only, relishing nothing so much as union and communion with Him. But deceived by sin, man sought out many inventions, pre-

pared many idols, invented many pleasures which should be to him substitutes for God and which should appease the deep longings for God. And thus the very wants and miseries, the very woes and vices of man proclaim the greatness of his nature; indicate that he is too mighty a being for this perishable world, show that God and God alone is sufficient for the happiness of the spirit which in his own image he has made.

Take drunkenness. What is it? Analyzed and traced to its source and motive, we find that this vice, so foul, so degrading, originates in a craving of the soul after a supreme good. It is only by drinking the poisonous cup that the man thinks he can reach the pleasure or escape from the miseries of life and live for a brief interval in an ideal world. This is the motive, at least at first, although afterwards the vice becomes a passion, and is indulged in for its own sake. And when the idolatry has run its length, despised by those who for the sake of his dangerous accomplishments once courted his society, driven from his drunken haunts by the very men who had been building up their accursed fortunes out of the wreck of that poor man's body, soul, peace, character, home, or all that is dear and precious on earth, beggared, broken, despised, forsaken, the voice of God seems to sound forth the same bitter and terrible irony, "Thy calf has cast thee off."

Too often the same sad results follow the pursuit of fame. There is no more fickle goddess. All history, sacred and profane, ancient and mod-

ern, shows on what a precarious footing he stands who is a popular idol, what a capricious divinity he worships who courts the applause of men. See David in the day of his triumph, hailed by the acclamations of the multitudes, surrounded by the crowd of maidens with harps and garlands, singing, "Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands." Our Saviour himself furnishes an illustration. He had his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and was crowned with unsought honors. The steeps of Olivet were crowded with the host who went before him shouting, "Hosanna to the son of David!" But how soon the same crowd were crying, "Away with him! away with him! Crucify him! crucify him!"

The same sentiments can be applied also to unbelief. The effect of skepticism upon those who cherish it is not such as should recommend it. Even those whose morals are not relaxed by the absence of religious safeguards, are yet made to feel that the loss of faith in the religion of Christ is a loss irremediable. There is no substitute for it. Skepticism is joyless. It robs the soul of all sure hope in the life beyond this world. When that hope is retained, it is on no grounds of evidence, it is sustained by no solid reasons, and hence is destitute of every element of security. But the most earnest and resolute looking for immortality that is supported by no authentic promise of God has to contend with doubts and misgivings, and not seldom dies in the unequal struggle. The future state is, at the best, a *perhaps*; the

only refuge against despair is a strenuous optimism, a determined assertion that everything will be right. This is no mere fancy sketch. The actual experience of skeptics, as testified by themselves, and even by those who would fain make their unbelief attractive, is that of unrest and unhappiness.

But we cannot stop here. God deals with nations in time. In the case of individuals idolatry seems successful during life, and the full truth of our subject comes out only as we take eternity into view. The separation made by iniquity between the soul and God, unless that iniquity be pardoned, is eternal; the harvest of the sowing to the flesh is largely reaped in another world. The sorrow of sin is endless. We do not propose considering at length the eternity of future punishment, the abandonment of the lost soul even by the idols of the present life, but will present simply some of the grounds on which this doctrine rests securely.

1. There are the numerous passages of Scripture which place the future states of men in contrast: "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked shall perish." "Gather ye first the tares, and bind them in bundles and burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. But cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Then shall the King say to them



on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: then shall he also say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

These, and many like passages, show if the state of the righteous be final, the contrasted state of the wicked must likewise be final. They also are not only silent as to any other state following that of destruction, but the phraseology is inconsistent with such a state.

2. There are the passages which speak of future punishment as everlasting, eternal, for ever, and for ever and ever: "Some to shame and everlasting contempt." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment." "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power," etc.

3. There are the passages which express the duration of future punishment by implication: "He hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." Let there be what certainty there may in the word eternal here, the meaning of it is fixed by the other expression, "hath never forgiveness." "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass

from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us who would come from thence." An impassable gulf fixed between the blessed and the accursed equally militates against the recovery of the one and the relapse of the other. "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Whatever may be the precise idea of the "fire" and the "worm," there can be no doubt of their expressing the punishment of the wicked; and its being declared of the one that it dieth not, and of the other that it is not quenched, is the same thing as their being declared to be endless. It will astonish any careful reader of the Bible to see how such passages can be multiplied, how many are without force and meaningless except as the doom of the finally impenitent be endless.

4. There are those passages which teach that preparation for heaven is confined to this life: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, . . . I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." "Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that shall be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able." "Except a man

be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”

This eternity of future punishments is a terrible doctrine, but it is true and is profitable. Of none can it be said more truly than of the hardened, impenitent sinner, “Thy calf has cast thee off.” But there is One who never fails those who put their trust in him. An English statesman as he lay dying, having experienced the bitterness of the truth we have considered, is reported to have said, “If I had served my God as faithfully as I have served my king, he would not cast me off now.” How true! “They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mt. Zion that cannot be moved.” “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.” “He is not man, that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent.” “So shall we ever be with the Lord.”

## CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL.

"BECAUSE YE HAVE FORSAKEN THE LORD, HE HATH ALSO FORSAKEN YOU."—2 *Chron.* 24:20.

THERE are three leading thoughts which impress themselves in connection with this passage. The first is the *long-suffering* of God. This slowness to anger, this forbearance on God's part towards those who provoke him every day and in the face of all their provocations, is emphasized throughout the Bible. Not only is the word used frequently, but the passages which are equivalent in meaning are very numerous, and this long-suffering is set before us as a part of his excellent greatness.

This is so, for one thing, because it declares his *power*. He has no need to hasten his work lest he may not be able to execute a sentence at all. There can be no fugitive from his justice who fills heaven and earth, to whom all the ages and all the worlds belong. What he does not punish now, he can punish by-and-by; what he does not punish here, he can punish there; and what not in this world, in the next. He may well defer his anger who has all time and all eternity in which to work out the counsels of his will, and whom none can escape.

But this long-suffering declares also his *love*, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Here is the true



secret of the divine forbearance. He knows what powers of the world to come are at work in his church for the conversion of sinners, and being converted, for their full and final redemption. He knows the efficacy of the blood shed from the foundation of the world and the prevailing might of the intercession before the throne. He knows the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit in quickening those who were dead in trespasses and sins, how the man who to-day is most obstinately against him, may to-morrow cease his rebellion and suffer himself to be led, like Paul, a trophy and captive of the divine power and love.

And even when this is not so, when the riches of that grace and long-suffering appear to have been spent in vain, still the manifestations of that grace and long-suffering shall not therefore have been for naught. They shall have served their purpose, and if not that purpose which was nearest his heart, that of bringing men to repentance and to life, then another, that of clearing the righteousness of God. For God in his infinite condescension is not content with merely *being* just and righteous in all his ways; he desires to approve himself such, and that his justice and righteousness and goodness should so plainly appear to all the world that none should be able to call it in question. And thus in regard to the final condemnation and sentence of the wicked he will be clear when he is judged; every mouth shall be stopped. No one shall be able to say that the long-suffering of God had not waited for him.

And so everywhere in Scripture nothing is more remarkable than the slow advent of the divine judgments. If God brings a flood on the world of the ungodly, it is only after his long-suffering has waited for them while the ark was preparing (1 Peter 3:20); and though his Spirit should not always strive with man, "yet his days," that is his days of grace, "shall be a hundred and twenty years." Again, "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16); therefore they are allowed to dwell in the land, and judgment is deferred for centuries until they had filled up the measure of their sins. The guilty cities of Sodom and Gomorrah cannot perish before God has gone down and seen whether they had done altogether according to the cry of it (Gen. 18:21); words spoken after the manner of men, yet with a blessed truth behind them, namely that of the extreme deliberation with which the divine judgments proceed.

But there is no more conspicuous illustration of the long-suffering of God, unless it be the offer of salvation to the crucifiers of Christ and the persecutors of the early church, than that found in the history of the northern kingdom. The kingdom lasted upwards of two hundred and fifty years, and during that time had nineteen kings belonging to nine different families. It is very singular that not one of these kings was a godly man, while among the people corruption grew and wickedness abounded more and more. The yearnings of God's heart towards his people, bent on back-

sliding from him, are the most touching words in all literature, the Old Testament parallel to the tears of Christ over Jerusalem. His fidelity in warning and entreaty is marked throughout the dark history, and in nothing more than in the long list of prophets sent in his name. They are worthy of record: Jehu, Ahijah, Elijah, Micaiah, Elisha, Jonah, Oded, Amos, Hosea, Shemaiah, Iddo, Azariah, Hanani, Jahaziel, Eliezer, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, another Zechariah, Joel, Micah, Isaiah, besides several whose names are not known. "The Lord testified against Israel and against Judah by all the prophets and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes. . . . Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected his statutes and his covenant. . . . Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight." (2 Kings 17:13-18.)

Thus God's long-suffering, this patience, this deliberation, are, if possible, for the salvation of men; and, if not for this, if one is resolute to perish, if he has made a covenant with death and hell which he will not break, then for the vindication of God, that He may be justified in his doings and clear when he is judged.

Our second thought has reference to the sin of Israel. We must remember that this sin was not simply idolatry, but *apostasy*. Apostasy is a word

frequent in the language and literature of the church. It began to be used in the early days when Roman proconsuls besought Christians to abandon their faith, and brands the forehead of that emperor who, after the Roman world had outwardly submitted itself to Christ, cast off allegiance to the Galilean. But the original meaning of the word is not generally known, and is interesting and instructive.

It seems to be derived, as so many important New Testament phrases are, from the system of ancient slavery. A Greek slave was the absolute chattel of his master, a "living working-tool and possession," as Aristotle says. There was only one way of escape—his master might set him free. In this case, though a freeman, that he owed his former master the highest gratitude was enforced not only by public sentiment but by the law. The master was now his "patron" and he "his freedman." Any failure of attachment on his part to his emancipator was technically called *apostasy*, and any flagrant instance of it, especially the offence of choosing another patron, was punished in an action called *apostasíou díkē*. By this action the freedman was condemned to return to his original state and was publicly sold into slavery.

How graphically these stern public laws of Greece illustrate the nature of apostasy! Whom the Son makes free are free indeed; the only yoke is the yoke of love. And this yoke the true-hearted freedman of Christ delights to wear; even as Paul, who so often boasts of his liberty, delights



to commence his epistles as "Paul, the slave of Jesus Christ." Our Lord who has absolute power over us by creation, and a double title by redemption, says, "Henceforth I call you not servants (slaves), but friends," but the response of the emancipated heart is, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, thy servant and the son of thy handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds." I am thy servant *though* thou hast loosed my bonds, thy servant *because* thou hast loosed my bonds. Notice too how faithfully to those thoughts the sin of Israel is declared: "For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and had feared other gods." (2 Kings 17:7.) This was apostasy pure and simple, renouncing their "patron" and choosing another.

Bunyan also, though he could hardly have known the Greek law, had the true conception of apostasy: "Then said Apollyon, Thou hast done in this according to the proverb, changed a bad for a worse; but it is ordinary for those that have professed themselves his servants, after a while to give him the slip and return again to me." The father of lies spoke a bitter truth. There are those who weary of the service which is perfect freedom; those who, like Israel, go from the service of God to the service of corruption. No change of creed, no separation from the church, no inconsistencies of conduct, can properly be branded as apostasy unless in the judgment of

charity they amount to this—a public breaking with the Lord Jesus Christ as Master and Lord, and taking up a position over against him among the ranks of darkness. But there are those who do thus even publicly break away from Christ and become liable even among men, like those Greek freedmen, to the indictment of apostasy. And there are those whose apostasy is of heart, known only to God and to their own conscience.

And how truly does this Greek metaphor of “apostasy” represent not only the nature of the crime but the nature of the punishment: “While they promise them liberty,” says the apostle Peter, “they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” Better for them, for now, aiming at liberty from Christ’s easy yoke, they become more than ever the bond-slaves of evil. Thus was it with Israel; they were given over to reap the bitter fruit of their own devices. More than two hundred years of idolatry and final apostasy have been followed by more than two thousand years of dispersion and alienation.

We have reached the end of the history of

Israel, and now it behooves us to stop and think and enter upon a comparison between the people of God of that time and of this, and make application of the lessons of history. In this comparison we need to remember that the responsibility to-day is greater, for they were called to righteousness under the old Law, we under the gospel of free grace. It has often been a question with historians and thoughtful men: "What will America's history and destiny be?" Will her glory also pass away? Will the course of empire flow east or west, north or south from our shores?

Different answers have been given according to the views or predilections of the individual. Some, with a blind and thoughtless partiality which they seem to think is a necessary part of true patriotism, have rejected the very idea of waning glory or decaying power in her. Then there are others who have cherished a vision from childhood, the vision of these United States growing not only in numbers and in strength, but in Christian power, till its brightness melts away into millennial glory. This is a Christian view and should be a matter of prayer as well as hope.

Then there are still others who have thought that it is of the substance of God's plan for the whole world to change his instruments in successive parts of the progress in order that no race or people should glory in his presence. But this is a problem far too vast and complicated for our handling. God will answer the question in his providence when the time shall come. He will

answer it actually by the conflicts of the nations and by the voice of the ages.

Meanwhile there is an answer sufficiently definite and sufficiently solemn in the history which it has been our privilege to review. If we fail in our generation to work in the high and holy task which God has as evidently assigned to us for the world's good as he committed his oracles and worship to the children of Israel; if through mammon-worship in any of its numerous forms, or through a corrupt religion, we apostatize from God, nothing can save us for very long; "the idols he shall utterly abolish" and "we and our father's house shall be destroyed." And *then* the very things which now constitute our security and our boast will become the instruments and illustrations of our fall and shame. Our knowledge will gleam like lightning among ruins. Our art refinements will be like the decorations of a sepulchre. Our failing commerce will summon all nations with which it has been carried on to behold the fate of the most gigantic folly the world has ever seen, while the very gales that pass over our desolated land will seem to wail and shudder with the pathos of the divine lament: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."



## THE TEMPLE REPAIRED.

"GOD LOVETH A CHEERFUL GIVER."—2 *Cor.* 9:7.

WHEN the beloved disciple was about to close his wonderful Gospel, replete with the discourses of the Master, he added these words, "There are also many other things which Jesus did," and words of course also which he spoke, "the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books which should be written." Who has not longed to see and to read more of the wonderful words that fell from the lips of him who spake as never man spake? However, the Lord knew how much the church needed. But the fact is that of all these volumes and libraries that could have been written, the Holy Ghost, guiding the writers of the New Testament canon, has chosen to give us, aside from the four Gospels, but one short sentence. This, however, is very precious and comes in very appropriately here in connection with the revived Old Testament church and its gifts. Meeting with the elders of the church at Ephesus, bidding them farewell to see their face no more, the apostle Paul thus closes his memorable address, "I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35.)

Similarly in the eighth and ninth chapters of

his second letter to the Corinthians Paul exhorts Christians to the grace of liberality, using not the words indeed but giving the example of Christ. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." And he sums up his instructions in part as follows: "But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

These sayings ought to be written in our hearts; they should be very precious to us—especially the one sentence rescued from oblivion, and which might be written as the motto of our Lord's whole life—and exemplified in our lives; we should make it manifest that, in our practical and speculative judgments alike, we also account it "more blessed to give than to receive." Let us see, if we can, why this grace of cheerful giving is so heartily commended and insures to its possessor the love and favor of God.

For one thing, it is like God. The glorious God is ever giving. He opens his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing. He gives to the beast his food and to the young ravens when they cry. He gives to all life and breath and all things. He gives us richly all things to enjoy. He is the giver of every good and perfect gift. But preëminent among his endless gifts is the un-

speakable gift. God so loved the world that he gave his Only-begotten; and you remember the unanswerable argument of the apostle Paul, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Hear His words, "I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;" "A new heart will I give you;" "I will give you a heart of flesh;" "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them." Yea, he ever gives himself. "I will be to you a God and ye shall be to me a people." Hence these words of Jesus: "I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, *that ye may be the children*"—that is, may by your likeness to him manifest yourselves to be the children—"of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Therefore one reason why God loves a cheerful giver and why for us it is more blessed to give than to receive is that it is like God.

For a second thing, it is more like Christ. It is true that Christ did not decline to be a receiver. Certain women ministered to him of their substance, and he was constantly dependent for shelter and for food upon his followers and friends. But it is remarkable how his very receiving somehow ran into a much more abundant giving. He

asked drink of the woman of Samaria, but it was to prepare for the word, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." And those "certain women" are distinctly stated to be those "which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities."

The whole life of Christ was a scattering of blessings. "He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with the devil." "Whithersoever he entered, into villages or cities or country, they laid the sick in the streets and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment; and as many as touched him were made whole." And how the word is ever occurring in his discourses, "The meat that I will *give* is my flesh, which I will *give* for the life of the world." "The meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall *give* unto you." "Come unto me, and I will *give* you rest." "My peace I *give* unto you." "I *give* unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." Ascended on high he has received gifts for men, and still his welcome voice is heard: "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." "I will give you a crown of life." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life;" "give to eat of the hidden manna." And so another reason why God loves a cheerful giver, and why it is more blessed to give than to receive, is that it is Christlike.



Then, for a third thing, there is the receiving by giving. Some one said in answer to an inquiry how to gain information on a certain subject, "Write a book upon it." To speak less specifically, we may express the principle by saying that the best way to gain knowledge is to impart it to others. An active Sabbath-school teacher will gain more biblical knowledge than another person of equal natural talents will acquire in a long lifetime of hearing the ablest sermons. There are several reasons for this. The mind of the earnest teacher is wide awake ; his zeal is an active stimulus to study and thought. It is especially true that the effort to communicate truth to others makes our own notion of it clearer. Then also growth in knowledge secured in this way will be likely to be accompanied by growth in grace. "Knowledge," without the exercise of Christian love, "puffeth up;" but when sought and wrought upon by the mind for the purpose of doing good it becomes a means of spiritual blessing. If we would be watered ourselves, we must water others. Especially is it true of the gospel and everything connected with it, that we must spend it or lose it. The more we give the more we have. God makes all its grace abound towards us, that we, having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. Yes, this is the law: we work and grow strong; we give and grow rich; we speak because we believe, and then believe more firmly because we have spoken. And because God taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy and de-

sires our increasing sanctification, he loves the cheerful giver, while we in the fulness of our own increasing spiritual wealth learn how much more blessed it is to give than to receive.

A fourth reason may be found in the present happiness and the future reward of our liberality. The truth is that Christian giving of all kinds—of property, sympathy, counsel, prayer—flows out of a certain affluence of peace and happiness. Paul says of the Macedonian Christians that the “abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” On the other hand, we call the mere receiver, the covetous, the illiberal a miser, a wretched one. No worker for Christ but knows the joy of his service; and did not our Saviour feel the same? He did ask drink of the woman of Samaria, but the Bible does not tell us that he obtained it. Is it not possible that his thirst was forgotten in the joy of saving another lost one? And when his disciples returned from the city and said to him, “Master, eat,” he answered, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of;” and they said, “Hath any man brought him ought to eat?” Jesus said unto them, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work.”

And then there is the future reward, for “whoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward.” “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath

given will He pay him again." "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which ye have showed towards his name in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister." And what a marvellous reward! Hear our Saviour again: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was a-hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." A kingdom for a little bread or a cup of cold water or some easily spared garments! In this amazing recompense, this astonishing reward, God shows the love he has for the cheerful giver; and through all eternity we will know how in this life, as we sought to honor our Master and do good as we had opportunity, it was more blessed to give than to receive.

Let us now consider the *giving itself* which God loves and which is so blessed. It is threefold: the giving of our means, the giving of our sympathy, help, counsel, and the giving of our prayers.

1. It is the giving of our means, and this, as the words of Christ we have just quoted plainly indicate, either for the relief of temporal distress or need, or for the advancement of the cause and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world.

It is neither possible to give the space nor is it necessary to dwell at length upon the multitude of ways in which this form of Christian charity may manifest itself. Rather let us notice that when many claims are made upon our means we should bid them all welcome. Not that we ought to give to all, for we may not be able to do that ; but first we ought to regret only our inability, and not regret the calls, which are only so many opportunities of happiness to ourselves and others, and then we shall find that we can give something at least to many more objects than we dreamed possible, and find also, as to those to which we contribute, that we shall do it with hearty goodwill, in the spirit of the Macedonian Christians, who "to their power, yea, and beyond their power, were willing of themselves, praying Paul with much entreaty that he would receive the gift and take upon him the fellowship of the ministering to the saints."

2. We spoke of the giving of our sympathy, aid, counsel: sympathy in distress, help in weakness, counsel in perplexity. Paul's giving must have been very largely of this kind, and so also must Peter's, for to the importunate beggar at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple he said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee." Of course, if a brother or sister be naked or destitute of food and we give them not, having them to give, the things which are needful to the body, offered sympathy and counsel were but a mockery of their distress.



But how precious is true *sympathy*, either with or without material aid, when either it is not needed, or if needed, is not within our power. "David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life; and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood. And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David into the wood and strengthened his hand in God." We are not surprised at David's love for Jonathan after this proof of friendship. So Job was able to say, "I was eyes to the blind and feet was I to the lame;" that is—eyes, counsel to the blind in perplexity; feet, help to the lame in weakness.

Last of all, there is the giving of our prayers. This is a very precious kind of giving for two special reasons; first, because we can all give thus; and secondly, because we can thus give to all. We can all give thus. We may have no pecuniary means or may be restricted in the number of objects to which we can contribute our money, or we may think from our position or social relations or lack of education, or from some other reason sufficient in our mind, that we have no counsel, help, or sympathy to give the distressed, and yet we can bear them in the arms of our faith to Him who is a very present help in trouble. And we can thus give to all. We are by no means limited to those within the circle of our acquaintance or influence; we are not even limited to those who in other places may receive the support of our gifts in their labors of love. No rank or station, high or low, no distance of place, is any obstacle. Those in high places of honor and trust, and those

in the depths of degradation and wickedness; those close to us not only in residence but in the bonds of affection and kinship, and the far-distant and unknown heathen in the jungles of India or the still unexplored wilds of Africa, are within the wide scope of our intercession at the throne of grace. Therefore let it be our high and holy endeavor, as we abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge, to see that we abound in this grace also.

## HEZEKIAH, THE GOOD KING.

"THEM THAT HONOR ME I WILL HONOR."—I *Sam.* 2:30.

REMEMBERING that the kingdom of Judah was a theocracy, its political history becomes intelligible only as we study its religious history. And it is remarkable how closely the religious character of the several periods corresponded to that of the monarchs who sat upon the throne: in a religious point of view the history of the southern kingdom may be divided into four periods: the first extending through eighty-six years, and embracing the first religious decline and first religious revival under Jehoshaphat; the second including about 207 years, and marked by a second decline and a second revival under Hezekiah; the third continuing about eighty-eight years, with a third religious decline and a third revival under Josiah; and the fourth rapid decline of twenty-three years ending in the Captivity.

In this connection it is interesting to notice that three of the four chapters in Second Chronicles given to the reign of Hezekiah are devoted to the record of the wonderful revival and reformation which took place under his leadership, and we shall find it profitable to review the teachings of the Word on this important subject.

What are the elements of a revival? And when we use the word revival we take it in its popular signification, as a time of general awa-

kening. To ascertain these elements we might follow either of two processes. We could take the deductive method and from the accepted doctrines of evangelical truth could deduce what must necessarily be the conditions and the constituents of a true work of grace. Or we might take the inductive method and arrive at the same result from an investigation of the characteristics of revivals as recorded in history. Let us combine the two, using the one or the other as it may serve our purpose. We start then with the idea that the elements of a revival are precisely those that enter into the work of grace in the heart of a sinner.

A work of grace in the heart and a work of grace in the church are alike as to their *antecedents*, (1) in the *condition of the subjects*. The sinner is in a state of death; his condition is one of absolute exigency. No illustrations of weakness, ignorance, helplessness, exaggerate this state of the servant of the world and Satan. The church also is in a condition of decadence, of spiritual declension. Such is the state in which we find the church in every record of revival given in the Bible. The first of these blessed seasons is probably recorded in the twenty-sixth verse of the fourth chapter of Genesis: "Then began men to call on the name of the Lord." This remarkable event occurred about 240 years after the creation of Adam. The progress of moral evil in the antediluvian world, the sad departure of the early race of men, was manifested in fratricide, in going



out from the presence of the Lord, in personal violence, and in polygamy. The passage quoted is undoubtedly vague, but seems to point to a wonderful epoch, and to record the first marked display of God's power and grace to stay the tide of evil and to gather to himself a seed serving him. The name of Jehovah was certainly known and used before. Abel had prayed before and offered acceptable sacrifice. It was the first time they so prayed. The word "began" is a Hebraism, signifying the first of like things, used elsewhere of the first in a line of kings.

The second revival occurred in the time of Joshua, in the young congregation after the old generation had wasted away. Their fathers had greatly neglected the worship of God. Those long thirty-eight years of wandering appear to have been a period of extreme religious apostasy. Circumcision and the Passover were neglected; though the Levites may have clung to the tabernacle and its worship, the people were defiled with the iniquities of Baal-peor. Joshua calls an imposing and solemn convocation, and makes a remarkable address, closing with the charge, "Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord." The appeal was overwhelming. It melted down the whole of that vast assembly, and it is added, "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, who had

seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel."

Then follows a great falling away again under the Judges, which, with partial recoveries, lasted down the centuries under the Kings, when the times were marked by shameless idolatries, high-handed sins, and by terrible prophetic warnings and denunciations. Then Jehoshaphat comes to the throne, and one of his first undertakings as king was a great home missionary enterprise in which the princes took part with the Levites in teaching the people. Later on the king seems to have made a missionary tour over the whole kingdom for the purpose of stirring up the religious spirit of his subjects. This third revival under Jehoshaphat was decided and complete.

Jehoram succeeded his father, and under the pernicious influence of his wife Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, idolatry was again encouraged and the people were trained to its abominable practices. After him came Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, and Jotham, whose reigns showed some feeble and short-lived attempts at reformation, until in the reign of Ahaz the moral darkness was thicker than ever. Altars and high places consecrated to idolatry were not enough, and the king crowned his wickedness by burning his children in the Valley of Hinnom. Then came the fourth great revival under Hezekiah, as recorded in the twenty-ninth, thirtieth, and thirty-first chapters of Second Chronicles. The great doors of the Temple, which had been

for a long time closed, were thrown open, and the kings, the Levites, and the princes joined in the ceremonial of a vast sacrifice offered in expiation of the national guilt: "And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prospered the people: for the thing was done suddenly." Immediately upon this followed the celebration of the Passover, of which no celebration had been recorded since the time of Joshua. This was commemorated by the addition of a second week of rejoicing. Not only the whole population of the southern kingdom attended, but some even of the most northern parts of the apostate ten tribes. "So," says the record, "there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven."

Another period of apostasy and deep spiritual dearth followed until we come to the fifth, that most remarkable revival in the reign of Josiah. Hilkiah, the high-priest, found in the archives of the Temple the long-neglected book of the Law. He brought it out, and when it was read in the ears of the king, he rent his clothes and trembled under its denunciations. Without delay he issues his proclamation for a general gathering of the people, and then, leaning against the pillar of the Temple at the entrance of the inner court, he reads in the ears of the immense concourse all the words

of the book of the covenant. It was an august assembly and a most solemn occasion. Josiah next made a tour of the kingdom, destroying all the places of idolatrous worship, burning the images of wood, and grinding to powder the images of metal and stone. A terrible vengeance followed those who had ministered at these shrines, being executed on their own altars. Then the people were commanded to keep the Passover; they hastened to obey, and the sacred historian adds: "There was not held such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel."

But again there was an alarming decline which continued to increase for one hundred years till the Captivity, and extending through it to the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Again the book of the law of Moses is brought, and Ezra reads from morning till midday, "and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law." And when he opened the book in the sight of all the people, they all stood up. And when he blessed the Lord, the great God, "all the people answered Amen, Amen, lifting up their hands, and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." The sincerity of this revival was abundantly proved by the works that followed.

This is the last revival recorded in the Old Testament. We hear no more at least of idolatry, but the condition of the Jewish Church is well described by our Saviour in the days of his mis-



sion on the earth, formal, corrupt, hypocritical, and so it lasted, another great declension, until the day of Pentecost was fully come, the seventh revival of the Bible, transcending all that preceded it in its power, its fruits, and as an earnest of what may be expected under the faithful preaching of the gospel. We need not give in detail this well-known record: the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, the five thousand that believed, in the fourth of Acts, and in the sixth chapter how "the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly," and "a great company of the priests was obedient to the faith;" and in the eighth chapter, the disciples "went everywhere preaching the Word;" and in the ninth chapter, "all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron turned to the Lord;" and so the glorious record goes on.

Thus we see that these revivals were all extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit for the preservation or extension of the truth. They came in times of great spiritual need, when to human eyes the cause of God was broken, gone, lost. Such is the truth of revivals as related to the *condition of the subjects*.

The same is true as to the *occasional antecedents*. In both the sinner and the church there are certain human elements that frequently become the occasion, not the cause, of a revival. There are in the constitution of man certain elements that God uses for the carrying out of his gracious purposes, as for example, curiosity, imitativeness,

sympathy. Curiosity was the occasion of the conversion of Zacchæus; the same is true of the multitudes that "went out to see" John the Baptist. Attracted by his wild and weird aspect they heard one greater than a prophet, and the doctrine of repentance became the ploughshare preparing the soil for the seed of the gospel. So the fellow-townsmen of the Samaritan woman, attracted to see the man that had told her all things that ever she did, afterwards heard for themselves and believed. Examples of imitativeness and sympathy are also abundant. God used these same elements in the work of the apostles. Their miracles, tongues, prophesyings, were all novel modes. They awakened curiosity, they brought the crowds to the hearing of the truth. There is a sense in which the apostles were sensational preachers. They were so in a divine sense. These same elements are seen in modern revivals. They need safeguards, but they are by no means to be despised.

Then there is the *antecedent instrumentality*. This by God's plan is human. Philip calls Nathanael, Andrew invites Peter, Philip teaches the eunuch, Peter is sent to Cornelius. It is just here that men must plan and pray and work; not that God cannot work the wonders of his grace without man, but because God has ordained "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." So Hezekiah is himself first prepared by the terrible denunciations of God's wrath by the prophet Micah. When he is consecrated and his own heart

is on fire, he communicates like enthusiasm among the priests and then among the rulers of the city, and then the great multitude is reached.

The *efficient cause* in conversion and revival is the *sovereign purpose of God by the efficiency of the Holy Ghost through the Word*. "It is not by might nor by power." The apostles waited until they were "endued with power from on high." It was confessedly not by their own power; God had shed down that which was seen and heard. Two great practical questions here meet us: (1.) In view of God's sovereignty can God's people by prayer and labor do anything in obtaining or extending a work of grace? Most certainly. God will be inquired of. He has chosen us and ordained us that we should go and bring forth fruit and that our fruit should remain. Philip is commanded to the desert, and Paul in a vision hears the Macedonian cry. The whole history of the church proves that God not only honors the prayers of his people and owns their labors, but when appealed to he prepares his servants to fulfil his answer to his waiting church. Pentecost was in answer to the ten days' supplication that preceded it.

The other question, whether the prayers of a certain number of God's people in a church or a community necessitate a revival, we answer as frankly, No. The Holy Ghost is a person, and therefore has intelligence and will. He is infinitely wise, and in the divine plan of redemption has his own purposes, his own times, his own ways. The question then arises, Has the economy

of grace been so revealed to us, or can it be so interpreted from experience, that we may determine the principles on which the Spirit exercises his sovereign pleasure in the bestowment of his influences? Perhaps we should say, No, not fully. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." Still much may be said, and we may be sure that the Holy Ghost will reveal himself in keeping with his *hatred of sin*. So there may be an Achan in the camp, and Israel may war in vain until the accursed thing is removed. The church may be entangled with the world like the camp in the wilderness with the Midianites, and God's judgments may fall upon her.

The Spirit also will honor his *appointments*. There is a church, a ministry, and means of grace, and to them he has committed the word of reconciliation. The whole history of the church proves this. In vain will Israel cry for the opened heavens and the gift of the Spirit when they are robbing God in tithes and offerings. We may wish that all God's people were prophets, but they are not, and the Holy Ghost says now as of old, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work."

Again, in all his operations the Spirit will honor his *promises*. This thought links itself with what has gone before. The gift of his influence is conditioned. Men must pray, must plan, must work. God will be inquired of, and while there may be occasions in history when God apparently has



showered his grace upon a lifeless and indifferent people, it may have been only apparently. Elijah knew not that seven thousand men in Israel had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Again, the Spirit will honor his *threatenings*. If his promises are yea and amen, so are his denunciations. He hates sin and will not suffer it to go unrebuked even among his people. Israel a hissing and byword, though once the chosen nation and beloved of God; the seven churches of Asia with only a name in history, though once the joy and crown of the apostles; the first triumphs of the ascended Jesus are at once an illustration of this truth and a standing warning to all ages. Even Paul, the faithful, inspired apostle, is called to Macedonia while he is dragged as one dead from Lystra; meets with wonderful success in one city, but shakes off the dust of his feet against another. God sometimes calls faithful ministers and churches to spend a life of prayer and toil without what we call success, as witnesses in judgment against a corrupt church or a stiff-necked community.

And in all this the Spirit will honor *himself*, will still be sovereign, and will so work that the glory shall be his. There are miracles of grace as well as of nature, and the Holy Ghost at times may manifest his sovereignty over his own laws.

Another question now arises, What means then should the church adopt, if any, to secure from God an ingathering of souls? We believe it becomes both the duty and the privilege of the

church, having removed all hindrances, to use all appointed means—prayer, praise, effort. The church should go to the world, and in the midst even of rebuff, scorn, derision, or persecution, should ever manifest the patience, forbearance, love, self-sacrifice, and desire of her Saviour and Husband. A revival should always be near the heart. We believe that the very doctrine of the sovereignty of the Spirit in these days of the dispensation of the Holy Ghost furnishes the only true, substantial ground for faithful prayer and effort. As the church of old, in the prayers and aspirations left on record, appears in the position of earnest, anxious longing for the coming of the Messiah, so should the church of these days, with its heritage of prophecy and promise, show the same earnest, anxious longing for that outpouring of the Spirit which shall bring all nations to the foot of the cross.

We must still examine the *constituents* of a revival. From beginning to end it is a work of grace. Grace manifestly begins the work, and grace must carry it on to completion, until the top-stone be placed with cries of "Grace, grace unto it." There is however something to be added as to the *accompanying characteristics* of revivals. In the first instance, *prayer* is honored in the record. "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." In the second revival *personal consecration* is emphasized, and long afterwards Jeremiah (2:1), in alluding to this time, speaks of "the kindness of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, when Israel

was holiness to the Lord." Under Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah personal effort is prominent; under Hezekiah and Isaiah the honoring of the divinely appointed ordinances and sacrifices of worship; under Jehoshaphat and Ezra and Nehemiah Scripture alludes especially to faithful preaching, or to speak more correctly, in Old Testament language, the reading and teaching of the Law.

At Pentecost and the wonderful revival which followed all these accompanying characteristics are noted, possibly only because the record is full. First *prayer* preceded and pervaded the whole movement. No one can overlook this agency who reads the history of the ten days between the ascension and the morning of the Pentecostal Sabbath. Afterwards, we read, "the disciples continued in supplication and in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in the breaking of bread and prayer." Accompanying this there was in every case faithful *preaching*. "Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them." "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them." "They which were scattered abroad travelled as far as Antioch and spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus." Again the whole church was engaged in personal effort. The different words translated preaching in our version include not only what we understand by the formal discourse of the pulpit, but also the more familiar exhortation, and even the word spoken by the wayside. It was a man-to-man and heart-to-heart movement. Then there

was personal consecration. All talents were laid on the altar and all powers consecrated, and every man used that of the Spirit which was given to him to profit withal. So should it be always, and so will it be when the fulness of time shall come and the Spirit shall be poured out without measure. We need no application to this chapter. Our own hearts will make it.



## JOSIAH AND THE BOOK OF THE LORD.

"GO INQUIRE OF THE LORD FOR ME."—2 Chron. 34:21.

IN Josiah we have a beautiful character. In him we have an ancient Luther springing out of the dark and shining like a bright burning light. He is introduced into Bible history to show the human race what are the possibilities of a single holy life. He is an inspiration both to boys and to men. He is an incentive both to early piety and to mature piety. In setting his history before us the Scripture gives us these two points from his biography.

## I. JOSIAH REMEMBERED HIS GOD IN EARLY YOUTH.

*There is a right and favorable time to begin the religious life. It is the season of youth.*

It is something to know what God wants, what pleases him best. This is what all those who mean to live for him wish to know. Through Josiah God tells us that he is best pleased with early piety. He wants the opening bud of life. He wants the dew of youth. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." He wants Samuel and Timothy when they are boys. Youth is the formative period of life. It is the seed-time. What is sown in youth will come to fruit in mature years. Youth is the twig which can be bent and shaped and trained. Age is the tree which has taken on its character and incline and perma-

nency. God will not reject those who come to him in any season of life, but he says, "Youth is the best time to come."

When life is given up to God in youth to be shaped and trained and inclined, it will be saved from bad habits which bind like chains, and from errors which eat like a canker, and from regrets which pierce the soul through and through with unutterable agony. It will have right and clear views of God from the start. Its faith and love will have a long time to grow. It will accumulate precious memories. It will bind men to the true and right and good by inclination and by habit, which will become a second nature. If the crystal vase be broken it may be mended; its broken pieces may be joined together, and it may still be a vase, but it is full of scars and seams. God says, "Give me the crystal vase of life ere the blow of sin shiver it, and I will keep it whole and unseamed. Give me your youth-time, and I will carry you down through life with an unsullied reputation and keep your character free from spot. This of itself will make you a power for good among your fellow-men." The days of youth are men's susceptible days. Impressions made then are deep and lasting. They are like the footprints made in the rock before it crystallizes. The wear of ages cannot obliterate them. The days of youth are the days in which character is formed. Now the formation of character is the chief business of life. Character is eternal. It is the one thing which we carry with us beyond the grave. From

this it is evident that our youth blesses or curses all of the subsequent periods of our being. Put saving religion into youth, and religion will be an influence through manhood, through old age, through eternity. Grant that religion is a good thing, and you grant at the same time that the sooner a man is religious the better it is for him. Religion is like health, and irreligion is like disease. We guard the child against disease, for a diseased childhood means a weak and exhausted manhood. A healthy childhood means a strong and vigorous manhood. It is as foolish to give childhood over to irreligion as it is to give it over to disease. A pious youth is in the spiritual life what a healthy youth is in the physical life. A young man or a young woman with ruddy cheeks, glowing eyes, and elastic step is a really fascinating picture. It is a prophecy of magnificent manhood or womanhood. A young man or a young woman thoroughly consecrated to God, this too is a picture. It is a prophecy of a spiritual manhood like that of Elijah or John the Baptist or Paul; it is a prophecy of a spiritual womanhood like that of Hannah or Deborah or Mary or Elisabeth. There are reasons enforcing early piety set before us by the story of Josiah. They are such as these:

(a.) *God, who created us, has a right to the whole of our lives.* There are rights of Creatorship, and these come in here. Every day spent apart from God is not only a dead loss to man, but it is a robbery of God. The works of the artist are bound to serve the artist. Their mission is to make him

known to men, to tell of his skill and genius. God has the same claim upon his works. He has the claim of a Creator. From all eternity he carried in himself the archetypes of all the things which are. He determined their existence. They are all bound therefore to serve him. For the most part they do. "The heavens declare his glory," the seasons proclaim his covenant faithfulness. If man does not serve him from the very beginning of his life, he is the only rebel in the material creation. If a rebel, God must deal with him as such. If the vessel does not answer the design of the potter, if it reflects upon his character and reputation, it must be broken in pieces. Let the clay remember that it is honored when the potter shapes it into a beautiful vessel to be used in the king's household. Let young Joseph and young Josiah and young Daniel remember that they are glorified by being accepted by their Creator-God and used in advancing the interests of his cause on earth. To be claimed and used by the Lord, this is our highest honor.

(b.) *A religious youth leads to a grand old age.* "The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness." There is a grand old age, and it is possible to reach it. It bears the same relation to life that the ripe golden fruit bears to the seasons. Ripe golden fruit is the joy and the crown of the seasons. The seasons are proud of it. Religion has produced such old age. We have looked upon it with our own eyes. It was full of settled faith, mature judgment, en-



larged experience, pleasant memories, palm-tree fruitfulness, golden prospects, and heavenly-mindedness. It was spent in the land of Beulah, on the mountain Delectable which overlooks the river of Death and the country on the other side. Of such an old age we might say, "The hoary head was a crown of glory and the arm-chair of its repose a throne of power." Old age of this character has a special promise from God. He says, "In the evening-time it shall be light." Children of the church and of the Sabbath-school, choose the highest type of life, and choose early. Avoid the distraction and the mental storm and the retributive justice which crowd the lives of such men as Balaam and Manasseh and Solomon. Choose the life of Josiah, with its Bible-reading and temple-building and reformation. Choose the life of David, with its songs of the Spirit. Choose the life of John, with its love and with the bosom of Christ as its resting-place. Choose the life of Paul, with its manly faith and courage and with its crown of righteousness which fadeth not away. Choose early.

## II. JOSIAH LIVED BY GOD'S BOOK.

Grand as was the life which Josiah lived before the Book of the Law was found, it was greatly improved by the finding of that Book. God's Book broadened his view of duty and deepened his conviction of sin and gave new enthusiasm to his reform. The study of the law brought a revival of religion. The whole incident of the finding of the Book of the Law, together with its results, was

a prototype of the finding of the lost Bible by Luther and its results. The two histories are parallel. Josiah and Luther were the men they were because they let the Bible make and rule them. Their reformations were the fruits of Bible seeds. Their lives were built up according to the commandments of God. If we are to have like lives we must render like obedience to God's law.

Consider the grandeur and glory of the life that is lived by the Bible. The commandments are thoughts and purposes from the mind of God. They are great with his love and foresight. They deal with the heart and discern its thoughts and intents. They command the obedience of our mental conceptions and purposes. They claim authority over all our words and acts. Practical work is the best kind of argument. Let architecture build its cathedrals and palaces and bridges, and you will at once see the capability of its laws. Let the tree drop its ripe fruit into your hand, and you will know its value and nature. Let the commandment point out the lives which it has built, and that will be conclusive. It bids us study the lives of such men as Enoch and Elijah. They are not made by circumstances nor by society, but by obedience to God's law. It is true that there are blemishes upon the lives of God's heroes, but these blemishes are the result of departure from the precepts of God, and are therefore negative arguments in favor of the commandments. The commandments make ready for the life above. Obedience to them gradually assimilates us to the holy

character of God, so that we are translated, as a natural result, into the perfect life of heaven. The heaven-life may seem a wonderful and sudden transition, but it is *not sudden* as a general thing. Preparation for it has long been going forward. At the sacred seasons in Rome the workmen engage for days in arranging the lines of lamps over the vast dome and portico of St. Peter's. When the appointed hour strikes, suddenly the whole structure bursts into flame and flashes in splendor. This flashing of hundreds of lights is not as sudden as it seems. It is the result of preparation. Even so there is great preparation for the heaven-life here, preparation of love and obedience. The final transition, with its complete incoming of God, only reveals the preparation of the past.

If we would see the ability of the commandments to build the grandest possible life, we must stand before the life of the man Christ Jesus and contemplate it. His life was a working out of the law, the putting of the commandments into a visible form. His life sustains the same relation to the commandments of God that the beautiful building sustains to the plans and specifications of the designer. The building is the plans and specifications put into marble and wood. Christ's life is the commandments put into deeds. He says, "I come to do the will of Him that sent me." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." If we had the power of analyzing every thought to which he gave lodgement, every plan which he

announced, every deed which he wrought, we would find in them as their very soul the substance of God's commandments. All the spirituality and beauty and reach of the commandments are in his life, which stands before us on the page of inspiration as *the true human life*.

### III. THE LESSONS.

#### 1. *Determine early to make the most of life.*

This will secure you against waste. This will obviate the necessity of shedding bitter tears in after life over the errors of youth. Life at best is not too long when every moment is rightly used. The words of Dr. Bonar are true and impressive :

“Tis not for man to trifle! Life is brief  
 And sin is here.  
 Our age is but the falling of a leaf,  
 A dropping tear.  
 We have no time to sport away the hours :  
 All must be earnest in a world like ours.  
 Not many lives, but only one, have we—  
 One, only one!  
 How sacred should that one life ever be,  
 That narrow span!  
 Day after day filled up with blessed toil,  
 Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil!”

#### 2. *The young and old should associate together for mutual benefit.*

Young Josiah had mature associates. There is in his history quite a catalogue of honorable names both of godly men and women: Jedidah, his mother; Shaphan, the scribe; Hilkipah, the priest; Huldah, the prophetess. These were all helps to



him ; they were like powerful right hands. They seconded his efforts and executed his will. Without them Josiah would not have been the man nor the reformer which he was. No matter how strong we may be morally in ourselves, we are made stronger by the presence and prayers and counsel of pious friends. This is true of both old and young. God has associated the young and the old together, and they need each other's society and fellowship. The aged need the daring and hope and poetry and cheer of the warm young heart. The young have need of the wisdom and conservatism and forethought and practicality of the instructed heart. The one balances the other. Wherever we see such association we see mutual benefit. We have beautiful illustrations of such association in the Bible: Eli and Samuel, Naomi and Ruth, Elijah and Elisha. Aged Christians should seek the young in the Christian life, whom they can help by their experience ; and young Christians should seek those advanced, whose life they can freshen by their vivacity and cheer.

3. *We should value and use the Scriptures.*

The Bible is a complete book, and it is intended to make complete men. It is able to train and teach every part of our nature. It is able to round the Christian man's character on every side. The reason we are so lean morally and spiritually is, we do not use the Bible. The reason we are lopsided and deformed, with one grace little and another large, is because we use the Bible partially. We do not use it in the discipline of our

complete life. We make it a rule in some things and reject it in others. Bible men are Christian men of large growth. Let it be settled that the Bible is God's book, and that it is the highest authority on earth in things moral and spiritual, and the character and destiny of the whole world will be changed. What use are we making of the Bible? What honor are we putting upon it? What is our testimony before men with regard to it? What do we expect from it? It contains revivals and reformatations. Let us bring these out of it and make them realities in our church and nation. It is the book for personal life and church life and national life.

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul :  
 The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple :  
 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart :  
 The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes :  
 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever :  
 The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.  
 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold ;  
 Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb ;  
 Moreover, by them is thy servant warned.”

## CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH.

"AND THE CITY WAS BESIEGED."—2 *Kings* 25:2.

## I. THE STORY.

THE history is thrilling with horror to an imagination which pictures its details. Demonized passions inflict all manner of atrocities. A great nation goes down in blood; and the workmanship of centuries, which embodies the genius of art and the accumulated wealth of the past, is reduced to ashes by the torch of a merciless victor. Is this hour of doom an unexpected and an unforeseen hour? No. The prophet of God, Jeremiah, had been announcing its coming for forty long years. But because God in his mercy delayed its coming, that Judah might have time to repent, men became careless and hardened and unimpressionable, and laughed to scorn the predictions of Jeremiah. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

*The fall of Jerusalem came only under the compulsion of man, and not of God's option.*

Infidels have harshly criticised God for the fall of Jerusalem. I am not ashamed of our God as he is revealed in this terrible page. Man is responsible for these dark scenes and not God. They are the legitimate results of Judah's treason against the King of kings. It is the criminal that is responsible for the jail and the whipping-post

and the gallows, and not our courts of justice. God in all this history will compare with the highest humanity of which his critics boast. Is there a single earthly power that would bear forty years with traitors? We see God in Jeremiah, his representative. The nation imprisoned Jeremiah because of his faithful words, but he stood true to it and acted the part of a friend. They cut his prophecy in pieces with a pen-knife, but he rewrote it. The nation cruelly laughed at Jeremiah, but for cruel laughter he gave the nation tears of loyal pity and love. The weeping Jeremiah is a picture of our God whose omnipotent arm hurls his thunder-bolt of judgment.

*The fall of Jerusalem did not come unannounced.*

Jeremiah gave graphic pictures of it years in advance. For forty years he kept predicting it. It was virtually foretold by the laws under which Jehovah put the nation when he organized it. For ten years Ezekiel, on the banks of the river Chebar, sent his warnings from Babylonia to Jerusalem. God put a warning into the captivity of the sister nation, Israel. By this event the voice of history said, "Let Judah beware lest her treason against God bring her the fate of Israel." But God brought the warning closer home even than this. Prophetic captivities took place right in the streets of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar had already devastated the land and marched in the streets of Jerusalem. Twice he had done so. Each time he had carried away captives to Babylon. The first captivity took place under the reign of Jehoi-



achin. It was then that the lad Daniel and other young princes were carried captive to Babylon. The second captivity took place under the reign of the son of Jehoiachin. It was then that Ezekiel and the great-grandfather of Mordecai were carried away captive. These captivities were admonitory and prophetic. They proclaimed what would become of the whole nation if it did not repent. These warnings set God forth in a most favorable light.

*The fall of Jerusalem was complete.*

God's work of judgment is just as complete as any of his works. He is a complete worker in every department. The stubborn resistance of the Jews rendered extreme measures necessary, or rather carried things to extremities. Jeremiah advised them to surrender at once and thus save themselves from the horrors of a siege and from the destruction of life and property which usually accompanies a siege. This advice was looked upon as treason. They stubbornly held out against the army of Babylon; and many of the terrors of the siege are to be attributed to their stubbornness. The siege brought famine, and famine brought pestilence. The cry of starvation pierced the air everywhere. The men and women and children who walked the streets were only living skeletons. Mad with hunger the people ate one another as food. Parents breakfasted upon children and children made their dinner out of the flesh of their parents. Horror of horrors! Bitter are the fruits plucked from the tree of sin!

When the city of Jerusalem was reduced to great and indescribable straits, then came the end. The battering-rams of Babylon crushed through the walls and the fierce Chaldæan troops poured through the breaches thus made and buried their keen swords in the hearts of the famished men and women and children. The streets ran blood, and heaps of dead, gashed bodies blocked the highways. King Zedekiah was pursued in his flight and captured. He was taken to Nebuchadnezzar and at once sentenced to a blind life. Before this sentence was executed his sons were slain before his eyes and then his own eyes were put out and he was hopelessly imprisoned in darkness. The last scenes of life which his eyes photographed upon his mind were the agonized faces and mutilated forms of his dying sons. With his mind full of anguish and his body profaned, he was led a captive in heavy chains to Babylon. Again we exclaim, Horror of horrors! Surely the way of the transgressor is hard. A few months after the city was taken, Nebuzar-adan, a Babylonian general, came and burned the Temple and the houses of the nobles, and took the people who remained as captives to Babylon. He only left the poor of the land to till it, and a few others like Jeremiah, who had advised the surrender of the city to Nebuchadnezzar. The poor were now avenged on their rich oppressors who had enslaved them. They were left possessors of the land while their old task-masters were now slaves. If we wish to see Jerusalem in its awful desolation

as left by the Babylonian army, we have only to open and read the book of Jeremiah's Lamentations. It is filled with funeral dirges over the nation. It is filled with pen-pictures of Jerusalem in its ruins. Jeremiah lamenting is the representative of God.

*The fall of Jerusalem was a means to an end.*

It meant the regeneration of the nation. It meant the elimination of idolatry from the nation. The Babylonian captivity was the furnace of God in which he put the Hebrew gold for purification. He did not mean the captivity to be the end of the national existence. He had a future for Judah. Jerusalem was still to be the city of God. The Temple was destined to rise from its ashes. There was a glory in store for the coming Temple that far surpassed the glory of Solomon's Temple. Jesus Christ, the true Shechinah, will enter it and shed there the light of divine truth. The Son of God will walk the streets of the holy city. The prophet who predicted the doom of Jerusalem predicted also the upbuilding. He sent letters to the captives carried to Babylon during the prior captivities and encouraged their hearts. He told them that their exile would not last beyond seventy years. When the Babylonians were besieging Jerusalem for the last time he was among his countrymen as a comforter, giving cheer. He unrolled a shining future in the blackness and gloom of the despairing present.

It is said that when the dreaded Hannibal massed his forces around the city of Rome, a cer-

tain Roman, in order to breathe fresh patriotism and courage into his fellow-Romans, bought at its full price the ground on which Hannibal had pitched his tent. That Roman was only following in the footsteps of the heroic and patriotic Jeremiah. While the captivity was a fixed certainty, with seventy years between him and its end, Jeremiah bought at its full value a piece of ground and had the deed registered. The act was intended to make known the purpose of God to restore Judah, and to beget faith in that purpose. Jeremiah acted as though God's purpose were a reality. It did become a reality, and that purchased property was enjoyed by the family of Jeremiah. The captivity wrought its mission. God kept the faith and patriotism of the people alive by means of his prophets who lived among the captives, and some of whom he raised to the highest positions of power in the victorious nation. The exaltation of men from their homes revealed to them that God was with them, and working for them and carrying them on to the fulfilment of his declared purpose. When the hour struck for the captivity to cease, God had Hebrew men in high places to lead back to Jerusalem those who were true enough to go, and Hebrew men with sufficient influence to secure from the throne an edict of release. The captivity ended as God said it would, and there returned to Jerusalem a little nation, chaste and loyal and consecrated to God. The Captivity was a means to a glorious end, and the glorious end was reached.



## II. LESSONS.

1. *We are taught confidence in the over-rule of our God.*

How supreme this history makes God! There is nothing that can surprise him. He sees the end from the beginning. Nothing can take place contrary to his will. The kingdom which it has taken generations to build up is dashed to pieces by a foreign power, but he calmly says, "I have used this foreign power as my rod." He points to his predictions of years past which foretell it. He brings forward messages of by-gone years in which he calls Nebuchadnezzar "my servant." God is so completely master of all time and of all creatures and of all elements that he casts his thoughts hundreds and thousands of years into the future, and at the predicted moment, at the indication of the sun-dial or stroke of the clock, they become visible realities. God is supreme. He handles mighty armies and colossal nations and empires and vast planets, and they are in his hands no more than fragile toys in the hands of a robust child. He has one great purpose in time, and he makes all things work towards that purpose. That purpose is the cross of Christ. When the hour comes for its erection he has all things ready. He uses nations in making ready. The Hebrew nation gives the Christ for the cross. The Greek nation gives a universal language for the gospel of Christ, by which it is able to reach all kingdoms. The Roman nation gives public highways into every kingdom, along which the messengers of

the gospel can run, and it gives universal protection, that they may the better deliver their declaration of the truth of Christ. In the past God's over-rule looked towards and centred in the cross of Christ; now his over-rule looks forward towards and centres in the throne of Christ. Events are now shaped by the hand of God so as to make the sceptre of Christ universal. God's providential hands are now busy tuning the harps of the nations for the outbursting song of the coronation to come: "Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ!"

2. *We should bless God for the holy prophets.*

We need not only the glorious company of the apostles, but we need also the goodly fellowship of the prophets. We need both to strengthen us in our faith. What helps the prophets were to the men of old! They were among the grandest men in the Old Testament times. No class of men did so much for the covenant people of God. They fearlessly denounced sin. They generously fostered and applauded righteousness. They heroically threw themselves between the nation and danger. The people of God could not have done without them. Even though their witness was not received, yet they were essential. They vindicated the righteousness of God in the severe judgment which he executed against Judah. Their faithful words were not in vain, for when the captivity came they explained its philosophy and in-

licated the way out of it. The prophets made the return of Judah a possibility.

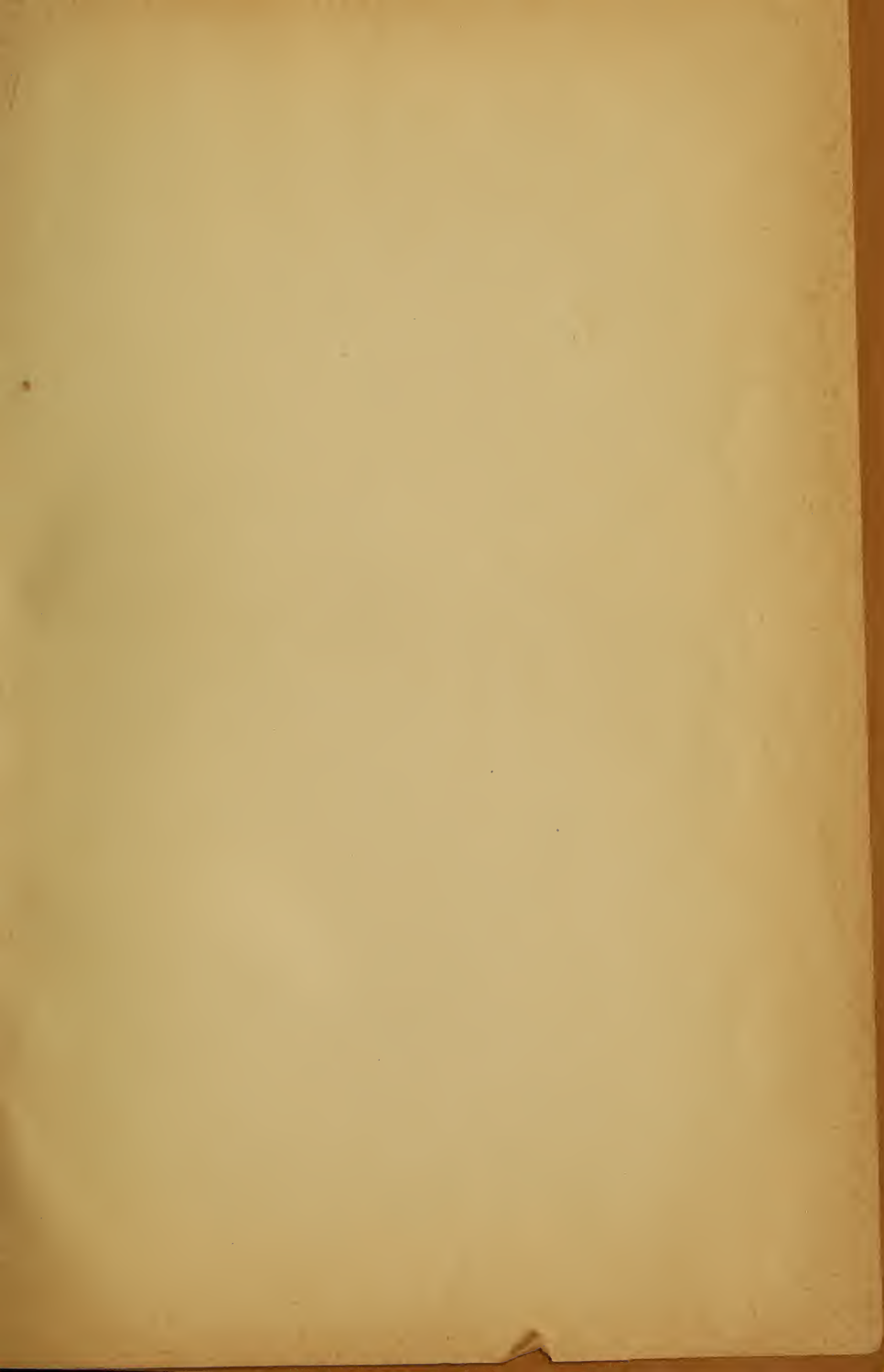
The prophets have not yet ceased to serve the world. By their writings they live among us and inspire us. We feel their faith and heroism and loyalty. They shame our timid treasons. They teach us how to be true witnesses. They put into our hands forged thunderbolts to hurl against the strongholds of sin and Satan. They give us fitting words with which to administer needed rebuke. Their characters stand before us to-day as the embodiment of everything that is grand and praiseworthy. The prophet-power will be a power as long as the world stands.

3. *We should make much of the evidential value of prophecy in establishing the inspiration of the Bible.*

History verifies what was written in the opening part of the prophecy of Jeremiah, and also the predictions of Ezekiel. We have one remarkable instance in connection with king Zedekiah, the chief person in this Scripture. In the book of Jeremiah it is said, "Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hands of the Chaldæans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall be until I visit him." In Ezekiel it is said, "I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldæans, yet shall he not see it, though he shall be there." There seems to be a contradiction here. Jeremiah says he shall see; and Ezekiel says he

shall not see. The history harmonizes the two prophecies and records the minute fulfilment of both. He saw the king of Babylon at Riblah, in the valley of the Orontes. But there his eyes were put out. So that when he was led into Babylon, a prisoner in chains, he was blind and saw not. He saw, as Jeremiah said he should. He saw not, as Ezekiel said he should not. Now whence this minute knowledge of things in the future, if God spake not through the men who wrote the Bible? If God spoke through them, then the Bible is what it claims to be, *the Word of God*. Accept of this as a fact, and consistency will require you to give the Bible the supreme place in your life; consistency will compel you to make it the standard of your faith and conduct.









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